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*The Lives and Literary Roles of Children in Advancing Conversion to Christianity: Hagiography from the Caucasus in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*¹

CORNELIA B. HORN

Children are the weakest and most fragile members of their families as well as of the society in which they live. At the same time children embody a potential for growth and renewal that is greater than that of anyone else. On many occasions, ancient and medieval hagiographers from the Caucasus have chosen to convey their message of the need for religious change and conversion from indigenous religions or later on from Islam to Christianity by employing examples that involve children. When these writers promoted the transition from sickness to healing and health, from sterility to fertility, from old to new, from what is wild, misguided, and unlettered to the elevated and advanced state of a society that is educated, and from worshippers that were members of other religions to followers of Christianity, they chose to avail themselves of the image of the child.

The structures of traditional family life seem to resist change. Challenges to change are even greater when the required transformation is presented as having been initiated by a society's or by a family's lowliest members, the children. Yet when composing their narratives, hagiographers of the Caucasus show in their writings that they were motivated by the idea that if change was brought about through the agency and participation of children, the new church that was created in the process of change and conversion had a greater chance to last. Perhaps some of these authors saw that a conversion that was spear-

1. An earlier draft of this article has benefited from the support of Angelyn Dries and Wayne Hellmann, for which the author wishes to express her gratitude. Two anonymous readers for *Church History* likewise have provided helpful suggestions. Robert R. Phenix, Jr., has again contributed much of his time and thought to discuss with me and evaluate the material that entered into this article. I gratefully acknowledge his assistance with this project. This work is dedicated to Katharina Jane, whose birth delayed the revisions more than anyone might have expected.

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headed by the young as its lowly agents had the character of the unexpected and thus could win over by surprise. The child that was weak and lowly but still was able to resist the forces of inertia and be the foundation of a whole society's move towards a new religion could function as a powerful symbol of the future. In family settings that were agrarian-based and strictly hierarchical, greatest resistance to social, cultural, and religious change tends to be mounted against movements that come about through its lowliest and most unseemly members. Yet the presentation of a conversion to a new religion that is brought about through those from whom one least expects it serves the purposes of the hagiographer by symbolizing the workings of a higher power, one that is stronger than any forces of might or reason. Precisely as Christian hagiography, the texts studied in this article work out on the level of society and culture, what the Christian message formulated for the realm of faith: God has chosen the weak, the low, and the despised ones (see 1 Corinthians 1:26–28).

A study on children in sources on Georgia in late ancient Christianity and the early Middle Ages, both in Georgian and in other languages used in the Caucasus and western Asia at the time, may seem like an undertaking somewhat out of the ordinary.² While studies of family life and even at times specific studies of children in the Middle Ages have appeared, thus far the geographical focus of these has been almost exclusively the Latin West.³ Few articles or books on children and family life have moved as far as Byzantium in

2. For a helpful introduction to Georgia and its people from ancient times to the Middle Ages, still see David Marshall Lang, *The Georgians, Ancient Peoples and Places* 51 (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966). See also David Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity: A History of Colchis and Transcaucasian Iberia 550 BC–AD 562* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).
3. See, for example, Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001); Danièle Alexandre-Bidon and Didier Lett, *Les Enfants au Moyen Âge: Ve–XVe Siècles* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 1997); Didier Lett, *L'enfant des miracles: Enfance et société au Moyen Âge (XIIe–XIIIe siècle)*, Collection historique (Paris: Aubier, 1997); Paul A. Hayward, "Suffering and Innocence in Latin Sermons for the Feast of the Holy Innocents, c. 400–800," in *The Church and Childhood: Papers Read at the 1993 Summer Meeting and the 1994 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. Diana Wood, Studies in Church History 31 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 67–80; Janet L. Nelson, "Parents, Children, and the Church in the Earlier Middle Ages," in *The Church and Childhood*, 81–114; Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, trans. Chaya Galai (London: Routledge, 1990, 1992); and Mary Martin McLaughlin, "Survivors and Surrogates: Children and Parents from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Centuries," in *The History of Childhood*, ed. Lloyd de Mause (New York: Psychohistory, 1974), 101–81, reprinted in *Medieval Families: Perspectives on Marriage, Household, and Children*, ed. Carol Neel, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, in association with the Medieval Academy of America, 2004), 20–124. For work on adolescents and youths, see, for example, the contributions in Giovanni Levi and Jean-Claude Schmitt, ed., *A History of Young People in the West*, vol. 1, *Ancient and Medieval Rites of Passage*, trans. Camille Naish (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of

the East.⁴ Christian life and culture at the margins or even outside of the Byzantine Empire, especially in the Caucasus, have remained the almost exclusive domain of a few specialists.⁵ The problem of access to sources in languages other than Latin and Greek is certainly part of what limits historians from expanding their inquiry into this eastern direction. Yet the simple fact that a topic has been overlooked or is deemed too foreign does not mean that as such it is not worth studying. It also does not have to imply that only insufficient sources are available to address the question, or that such a study would not lead to insights that enhance one's understanding of culture, life, and religion in antiquity and early medieval times. As ancient and medieval Georgian texts reveal, although children are little studied in the

Harvard University Press, 1997), which except for ancient Greece does not include any contributions on young people in the East.

4. See as notable exceptions Jane Baun, "The Fate of Babies Dying before Baptism in Byzantium," in *The Church and Childhood*, 115–25; Nikolaos Michael Kalogeras, "Byzantine Childhood Education and Its Social Role from the Sixth Century until the End of Iconoclasm" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2000); and Timothy Miller, *The Orphans of Byzantium: Child Welfare in the Christian Empire* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003).
5. Significant work on various aspects of the Christian history of the Caucasus has been accomplished by Cyril Toumanoff. See, for example, his *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1963). See also among numerous other articles by the same author "Medieval Georgian Historical Literature (VIIth–XVth Centuries)," *Traditio* 1 (1943): 139–82; "Iberia on the Eve of Bagratid Rule: An Enquiry into the Political History of Eastern Georgia between the VIth and the IXth Century," *Le Muséon* 65:1–2 (1952): 17–49, and 199–259; "More on Iberia on the Eve of Bagratid Rule," *Le Muséon* 66:1–2 (1953): 103–4; "Christian Caucasasia between Byzantium and Iran: New Light from Old Sources," *Traditio* 10 (1954): 109–89; "Caucasia and Byzantine Studies," *Traditio* 12 (1956): 409–25; "Armenia and Georgia," in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 4, *The Byzantine Empire*, ed. J. M. Husey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 593–637; and "Caucasia and Byzantium," *Traditio* 27 (1971): 111–58. Helpful collections of more recent Caucasian studies that aid in acquainting a larger scholarly public with ongoing work are Werner Seibt, ed., *Die Christianisierung des Kaukasus/The Christianization of Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia, Albania): Referate des Internationalen Symposions (Wien, 9. bis 12. Dezember 1999)*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, Denkschriften 296 (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2002); Tamila Mgaloblishvili, *Ancient Christianity in the Caucasus*, Iberica Caucasica 1, Caucasus World (Surrey, U.K.: Curzon, 1998); Bernadette Martin-Hisard, "Christianisme et église dans le monde géorgienne," in *Histoire du Christianisme: des origines à nos jours*, vol. 3, *Les églises d'Orient et d'Occident (432–610)*, ed. Jean-Marie Majeur and others (Paris: Desclée, 1998), 1169–231; and Bernadette Martin-Hisard, "Christianisme et église dans le monde géorgienne," in *Histoire du Christianisme: des origines à nos jours*, vol. 4, *Evêques, moines et empereurs (610–1054)*, ed. Jean-Marie Majeur and others (Paris: Desclée, 1993), 549–603. For the related realm of Armenia, one may also mention the recent volume by Robert F. Taft, ed., *The Armenian Christian Tradition: Scholarly Symposium in Honor of the Visit to the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome, of His Holiness Karekin I Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of all Armenians: December 12, 1996*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 254 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1997).

context of literature in Georgian and related to Georgia,⁶ children there are an integral part of ancient as well as early medieval society.⁷

In exploring primarily early medieval hagiographical literature, this article shows that children hold a distinct place in the literary construction of the Georgians' conversion to Christianity. Strategic healings of children by missionaries to the Georgian people captured the hearts of adults, men and women, and prepared them for the acceptance of a new faith. Miraculous healings of children continued to be an important tool to recruit converts from Mazdaism and Islam to the Christian faith throughout early medieval times. The earliest literary Georgian texts focus on children and portray them as martyrs for the new faith. Studying children in these texts allows one to observe deeply ingrained cultural patterns in parts of early medieval society and culture that interpreted religious adherence as a matter of family tradition, rather than as the choice of the individual. Circumstantial evidence gathered from the texts that were examined for this study also allows one to reconstruct features of child rearing and educational practices in early medieval Georgia. The emphasis on the religious and secular education of children emerges as a contribution that the spread of Christianity brought to the Georgian region from relatively early on.

This study of children's lives in Georgia draws its data primarily from hagiographical texts composed in classical Georgian. Hagiographic traditions concerning children's lives that are preserved in other languages, primarily Syriac, are also considered insofar as they illuminate significant cases of the representation of children's experiences in Georgia. Hagiographical or historiographical texts composed in Armenian that allow one to cast glimpses at children's experiences as well as at their contribution to, or utilization in the process of Christianization in early medieval times in Georgia, or the Caucasus

6. Georgian scholars themselves have begun to reflect on the role of children in medieval Georgian literature. See, for example, Nat'ela Vach'nadze, *საახროვნო სისტემა და კართული საზოგადოების ზნეობრივი იდეალი* [V.-X. ss] [*Saazrovno sist'ema da k'artuli sazogadoebis zneobrivi ideali*] (Tbilisi: Tbilisi universitetis gamomc'embloba, 1998); and below, note 45. For one of the few articles that examines concepts from the realm of family relationships and their roots in Georgian and more broadly in Caucasian societies, see also Vera Bardavelidze, "The Institution of 'Modzmeoba' (Adoptive Brotherhood): An Aspect of the History of the Relations between Mountain and Valley Populations in Georgia," in *Kinship and Marriage in the Soviet Union: Field Studies*, ed. Tamara Dragadze (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 173–88.

7. For a study of thus far neglected people and questions in medieval times that are perceived as marginal, see also Michael Goodich, ed., *Other Middle Ages: Witnesses at the Margins of Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998). Margin and center, of course, are concepts the content of which depends on one's perspective and presuppositions.

more broadly, have not been investigated systematically for this study, although occasional reference is made to them where appropriate.⁸ It will be the task of future studies both to examine the broader range of Caucasian hagiographical literature more comprehensively with regard to the topic of children and to expand the investigation to include a fuller evaluation of historiography as a source of information, there and then also considering Armenian and Persian sources.

Two further comments are pertinent regarding terminology employed in this article, one remark to be made with regard to the geographical territory considered and one with a view to the diversity of designations employed when referring to these regions and their inhabitants. When speaking of "Georgia" and the "Georgians," this article is concerned with the regions of the southern Caucasus, and there more precisely the eastern regions, also known as "K'art'li" or "Iberia," bordered in the east by Caucasian Albania, in the west by Colchis, and in the south by Armenia. Both the missionary work of Nino and the origins of Peter the Iberian, accounts concerning which provide a significant focus of the present study, are to be situated in that region. The western areas are better known as "Colchis" or, from the eleventh century on as "Lazica."⁹ The occasional martyrdom account involving children, here for example that of the *Lives of the Children of Kola*, is situated in that region. A unified Georgian kingdom

8. A fuller study may wish to take into account texts like the Armenian version of the *Martyrdom of Abd al-Masih* (ed. Վարդեն վկայաբանությունը սրբոց հաղորդարհի քաղեսյոքի խառնընթաց [Vark' ew 'vkayabanowt' iwnk' srbots' hatentir k'aghealk' i čarentrats'; *Lives and martyrdom accounts of the saints selected from the collection of homilies*], 2 vols. [Venice: Imprimerie Arménienne de Saint Lazare, 1874], 1:3–25). See also Socii Bollandiani, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis* (hereafter BHO), *Subsidia Hagiographica* 10 (Bruxelles: Bollandists, 1910), 1–2; and traditions concerning the childhood of Gregory the Illuminator (for example, Agathangelos, *Պատմության Հայոց* [Patmowt' iwn Hayots'; *History of the Armenians*] §§ 34–37 [R. W. Thomson, Armenian text and trans., *Agathangelos: History of the Armenians* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1976), 48–53]; and Moses Khorenats'i, *Պատմության Հայոց* [Patmowt' iwn Hayots'; *History of the Armenians*] bk. 2, chap. 80 [M. Abelean and S. Yarut' iwn, ed., *Մուսիսի խրեմագույ Պատմության Հայոց* (Movsisi Khorenats' woy Patmowt' iwn Hayots') (Tbilisi, 1913; reprint Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan, 1981), 219–21; Robert W. Thomson, trans., *Moses Khorenats'i: History of the Armenians*, Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies 4 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 228–29]); and his sons and nephews Aristaces, Verthanes, Iusik, Gregorius, and Daniel (BHO entries 108 and 109, pages 26–27). See also below, pages 33–34.

9. See N. I. Lomouri, "საქართველოს სახელწოდებანი ბიზანტიურ წყაროებში [sakartvelos saxelts' odegani bizant' iur ts' g' aroebsi; 'The Designation of Georgia in Byzantine Sources']," in Georgiy Georgievich Paichadze, ed., *საქართველოსა და ქართველების აღმნიშვნელი უცხოური და ქართული ტერმინოლოგია* [Sakartvelosa da kartvelebis aghmnišvneli utsxouri da kartuli t' erminologia; 'Foreign Expressions for Georgia and Georgians and Georgian Terminology'] (Tbilisi: Mec' niereba, 1993), 73–91.

that also encompassed these western regions did not emerge before the eleventh century. Thus, although the witness to the martyrdom of these children is preserved in the Georgian language, the traditional site of these events, technically, was part of the ancient Caucasus region more broadly, yet not of “K’art’li” or “Iberia” specifically.

A second comment pertains to the more limited variation of designations for languages and ethnic groups that one encounters in western European, and more generally English-speaking scholarship versus the rich and very detailed examinations of such linguistic groups and ethnicities in native Caucasian scholarly literature. Here is not the place to take up a detailed examination of the ethnic and linguistic makeup of the Caucasus in late ancient and early medieval times. Suffice it to say that whereas scholarship in western European languages traditionally and often readily availed and sometimes still avails itself of “Georgia” and “Georgians” as a summary descriptor,¹⁰ modern scholarship in Georgian itself provides greater nuancing.¹¹

10. For considerations of the history of how European scholars applied terminology to Georgia and the Georgians, see G. I. Gelashvili, M. A. Mgalob’ishvili, and G. G. Paichadze, “საქართველოს და ქართველების აღმნიშვნელი ტერმინები ევროპულ ენებში [Sakartvelos da kartvelebis aghmniṣneli t’erminebi evrop’ul enebṣi; ‘The Terms “Georgia” and “Georgians” in European Languages’],” in Paichadze, ed., *საქართველოს და ქართველების*, 294–309. Not much more detailed differentiation is evidenced in Russian usage. See the article by G. G. Paichadze, “საქართველოს და ქართველების აღმნიშვნელი ტერმინები რუსულ წყაროებში [Sakartvelosa da kartvelebis aghmniṣneli t’erminebi rusul ts’q’aroebṣi; ‘The Terminology of the Designations of Georgia and the Georgians in Russian Sources’],” in Paichadze, ed., *საქართველოს და ქართველების*, 286–93. For recent work that displays greater sensitivity to ethnic and linguistic diversity, see, for example, the usage of terms in David C. Braund, “Georgia,” in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 465–66; and the discussion in Stephen H. Rapp, ed., *K’art’lis c’xovreba: The Georgian Royal Annals and Their Medieval Armenian Adaptation*, 2 vols. (Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan, 1998), here 1:13, n. 1.
11. A very rich resource for examining modern scholarship in Georgian on the linguistic and ethnic diversity of the Caucasus region can be found in the various articles, collected and supplemented by summaries in Russian and English, in G. G. Paichadze, ed., *საქართველოს და ქართველების აღმნიშვნელი უცხოური და ქართული ტერმინოლოგია [Sakartvelosa da kartvelebis aghmniṣneli utsxouri da kartuli t’erminologia]*. See there especially the contributions by M. P. Inadze, “ტერმინები ‘კოლხი’ და ‘კოლხეთი’ ანტიკურ მწერლობაში [t’erminebi k’olxi da k’olxeti ant’ik’ur mts’erlobaṣi; ‘The Terms “Colchians” and “Colchis” in Classical Sources’],” 43–55; V. V. Vashakidze, “ტერმინები ‘იბერია’ და ‘იბერები’ ანტიკურ წყაროებში [t’erminebi iberia da iberebi ant’ik’ur ts’q’aroebṣi; ‘The Terms “Iberia” and “Iberians” in Classical Sources’],” 56–72; Lomouri, “საქართველოს სახელწოდებანი ბიზანტიურ წყაროებში”; T. D. Chkhidze, “საქართველოს და ქართველების აღმნიშვნელი ტერმინები საშუალო სპარსულსა და პართულ ენებში [Sakartvelosa da kartvelebis aghmniṣneli t’erminebi farsualo sp’arsulsa da partul enebṣi; ‘The Terms Designating “Georgia” and “Georgians” in Middle Persian and Parthian’],” 107–20; K. G. Tsereteli, “‘ქართველისა’ და ‘საქართველოს’ აღმნიშვნელი ტერმინები არამეულსა და ებრაულში [Kartvelisa da sakartvelos aghmniṣneli t’erminebi arameulsa da ebraulṣi; ‘Terms Designating “Georgia” and “Georgian” in

Western Georgia for example was known not only as Colchis, but also early on as Egrisi, Chaneti, or Abkhazia (from the late eighth to the eleventh century).¹² Eastern Georgia is referred to as K'art'li, Kaxet'i, Kukheti, Hereti, or Iberia.¹³ Despite the great ethnic and linguistic diversity of the region, however, literary references to children's lives that are examined here nevertheless are not gathered from documents in Lazic, Mingrelian, or Caucasian Albanian, for example, nor are children identified in the texts as coming from these or any other specific ethnicities. Moreover, this study does not incorporate any nonliterary evidence, for example of an archaeological and therefore more highly localized nature, to any significant extent. Thus, for purposes of retaining the topical focus of the present study, it seemed justified to continue to use the descriptions "Georgia" and "Georgian" in a somewhat more summary manner, certainly without any aspirations or claims to supporting or counteracting political agendas of a more recent past. This article concludes with comments on how research on children in early and medieval Christian Georgia might

Aramaic and Hebrew')," 146–52, who comments also briefly on Assyrian and Syriac usages; and E. V. Tsagareishvili, "'ქართველთა' და 'საქართველოს' აღმნიშვნელი ტერმინები სომხურ წერილობით წყაროებში [Kartvelisa da sakartvelos aghmniṣneli t'erminēbi somxur ts'erilobit ts'q'aroebši; 'The Designation of the "Georgians" and "Georgia" in Armenian Written Monuments']," 153–209. Yet for a helpful and nuanced orientation on territorial, geographical, historical, and political dimensions of Armenia and Georgia seen through the eyes of medieval Byzantine sources, see now also Bernadette Martin-Hisard, "Constantinople et les archontes du monde Caucasiens dans le Livre des cérémonies, II, 48," in *Travaux et Mémoires* 13, ed. Gilbert Dragon (Paris: Collège de France, Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2000), 359–530.

12. See, for example, O. I. Kachadze, "ტერმინი 'ეგრისი' (ეგური, ეგრი, ეგრისი) [t'ermini egrisi (eguri, egri, egrisi); 'The Term "Egrisi" (Eguri, Egri, Egrisi)']," 378–89; M. P. Inadze, "ტერმინი 'ჭანები' [t'ermini ḥ'anebi; 'The Term "Chan"']," 390–402; T. I. Gvantseladze, "კვლავ ეთნონიმ 'აფხაზისა' და მასთან დაკავშირებულ ფუძეთა შესახებ [k'v'lav etnonim apxazisa da mastan dak'avṣirebul pudzeta ṣesaxeḥ; 'Once again about the Ethnonym "Apxazi" and the Stems Related to It']," 571–80; and Thomas V. Gamkrelidze, "ძველი კოლხეთის სატომო სახელთა ისტორიიდან ('აფხაზ- ~ აბაზგ-' და 'აბაზა ~ აფსუა' ეთნონიმთა ისტორიულ-ეტიმოლოგიური ურთიერთობისათვის) [džveli k'olxetis sat'omo saxelta ist'oriidan (apxaz- ~ abazg- da abaza ~ apsua etnonimta ist'oriul-et'imologiuri urtiertobisatvis); 'From the Onomasticon of Ancient Colchis (On the Historical and Etymological Relationship of the Ethnonyms Apxaz- ~ Abazg- and Abaza ~ Apsawa')," 581–602. These four articles are published in Paichadze, ed., *საქართველოსა და ქართველების*.
13. See, for example, D. L. Muskhelishvili, "ქართველთა თვითსახელწოდების ისტორიისათვის [kartvelta tvitsaxelts'odebis ist'oriisatvis; 'Towards the History of the Self-Designation of the Georgians']," in Paichadze, ed., *საქართველოსა და ქართველების*, 337–77; and T. G. Papuashvili, "ცნებები 'კახი', 'კუხი', 'ჰერი' და მათი შესაბამისი ქვეყნების სახელწოდებების 'კახეთის', 'კუხეთის', 'ჰერეთის' შესახებ [tsnebebi k'axi, k'uxi, heri, da mati ṣesabamisi kveq'nebis saxelts'odebebis k'axetis k'uxetis heretis ṣesaxeḥ; 'On the Terms "Kakhi," "Kukhi," and "Heri" and Their Corresponding Geographical Names "Kakheti," "Kukheti," and "Hereti"']," in Paichadze, ed., *საქართველოსა და ქართველების*, 403–41.

benefit from and be further enhanced by comparative analysis of related accounts on children among neighboring Christian and non-Christian peoples to the north and south of the ancient Kingdom of Georgia.

I. CHILDREN AND THE CONVERSION OF GEORGIA

Children were not the concern of Armenian and Georgian hagiographers as such. Rather, the mention of children or childhood in these sources probably is the result of the standardization of older traditions that represent local and largely popular cults of individual saints. Since the accounts of holy children or of the conversion to Christianity in childhood were less likely to have been the contribution of an official redaction of these stories, they provide a glimpse into some elements of children's experiences and childhood in this region, or at least into the popular perceptions of children and childhood. It is precisely in these hagiographical traditions that the intersection of the sociology of children in ancient communities and Christian theology may be located.

The Georgians converted to Christianity at the beginning of the fourth century. Various accounts of that conversion are preserved in texts and their recensions from the fifth through the twelfth centuries. Acquaintance with the new religion may very well have been mediated through the strong Jewish presence in the country. Indeed, the first recorded missionary efforts, undertaken by a woman, seem to have been received positively within Georgia's Jewish community.¹⁴

The oldest written account of Georgia's conversion, preserved in Rufinus of Aquileia's *Church History* (402–3 C.E.), book 10, chapter 11, is based on an oral report of a certain Bakurios, a Georgian prince and commander of imperial Roman troops in Syria-Palestine.¹⁵ According to Bakurios, it was through the healing of a little boy that a woman missionary gained access to the hearts of Georgian adults, preparing them for eventual conversion.¹⁶

14. For discussion of the generally positive relations between Jews and Christians in early Georgia, and the latter's reception by the former, see Tamila Mgaloblishvili and Iulon Gagoshidze, "The Jewish Diaspora and Early Christianity in Georgia," in Tamila Mgaloblishvili, ed., *Ancient Christianity in the Caucasus*, 39–58; and Tamila Mgaloblishvili, "Juden und Christen in Georgien in den ersten christlichen Jahrhunderten," in *Juden und Christen in der Antike*, ed. Jacobus van Amersfoort and Johannes van Oort (Kampen: Kok, 1990), 94–100.

15. On Bakurios, see also David Woods, "Subarmachius, Bacurius, and the *Schola Scutariorum Sagittariorum*," *Classical Philology* 91:4 (1996): 365–71.

16. Rufinus of Aquileia, *Church History* 10.11, in *Die Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Eduard Schwartz, Theodor Mommsen, and Friedhelm Winkelmann, GCS Eusebius Werke II.2 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999), 973–76.

The woman, possibly of Cappadocian descent, who remained unnamed in Rufinus's account but who is called Nino in native Georgian sources, had traveled to the Pontus area and for a while had been living a pious and chaste life among the Georgians.¹⁷ She had been praying to God, and occasionally her Georgian neighbors, whose curiosity about Nino's seemingly novel lifestyle had become aroused, had come by for a visit. According to the tradition therefore Nino had had the opportunity to testify to them about her faith in the Christian God. Trust was being built up between her and the indigenous, non-Christian population, but no conversions took place. Things changed only when Nino worked a miracle on behalf of a child.

One day a Georgian mother was carrying around her sick child from door to door. As it was custom, she asked among the neighbors whether anyone knew a cure for the little boy.¹⁸ Thus, she also knocked on Nino's door. From her, the mother learned that no human help was available, but that Jesus Christ could restore health even to those who were most hopelessly sick. In order to prove what she had just declared, Nino took the little boy, laid him on a hair shirt that

17. The literature on St. Nino and the literary traditions surrounding her is voluminous. See now also Stephen H. Rapp, "Imagining History at the Crossroads: Persia, Byzantium, and the Architects of the Written Georgian Past" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1997), 331–59, who provides a helpful overview of the development of individual traditions and recensions; as well as Constantine B. Lerner, *The Wellspring of Georgian Historiography: The Early Medieval Historical Chronicle, The Conversion of K'art'li and The Life of St. Nino* (London: Bennett and Bloom, 2004), 89–96, who considers Nino's social status while in Mc'xe't'a. For the development of veneration of Nino, see also Bernadette Martin-Hisard, "Jalons pour une histoire du culte de sainte Nino (fin IVe–XIIe s.)," in *From Byzantium to Iran: Armenian Studies in Honour of Nina G. Garsoïan*, ed. Jean-Pierre Mahé and Robert W. Thomson, Occasional Papers and Proceedings, Scholars Press 8, Suren D. Fesjian Academic Publications 5 (Atlanta, Ga: Scholars, 1997), 53–78; and Nicole Thierry, "Sur le culte de Sainte Nino," in *Die Christianisierung des Kaukasus*, 151–58. For discussions concerning the struggle of Georgians to accept her figure as the one associated with the beginnings of Christianity among them, see Fairy von Lilienfeld, "Amt und geistliche Vollmacht der heiligen Nino, 'Apostel und Evangelist' von Ostgeorgien, nach den ältesten georgischen Quellen," in *Horizonte der Christenheit: Festschrift für Friedrich Heyer zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Michael Kohlbacher and Markus Lesinski, Oikonomia: Quellen und Studien zur orthodoxen Theologie 34 (Erlangen: Lehrstuhl für Geschichte und Theologie des Christlichen Ostens, 1994), 224–49; Cornelia B. Horn, "St. Nino and the Christianization of Pagan Georgia," *Medieval Encounters* 4:2 (1998): 242–64; and Eva Maria Synek, "The Life of St. Nino: Georgia's Conversion to its Female Apostle," in *Christianizing Peoples and Converting Individuals*, ed. Guyda Armstrong and Ian N. Wood, International Medieval Research 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 3–13.
18. For a study of customary behavior related to family matters, see Louis J. Luzbetak, S.V.D., *Marriage and the Family in Caucasia: A Contribution to the Study of North Caucasian Ethnology and Customary Law*, Studia Instituti Anthropos 3 (Vienna-Mödling: St. Gabriel's Mission, 1951).

served as her couch, and said a prayer.¹⁹ The boy was healed, and news of the miracle spread widely and in no time.

Bringing consolation and help to a mother in desperate need and acting with the greatest concern for the health and life of her child opened up the door for the missionary to reach the centers of power in the country. When the queen of the Georgians, who also had fallen ill, learned of the miraculous healing of the child, she desired Nino to come and pray for her as well. In the same manner in which Nino had proceeded with the child, she also laid the queen on her hair shirt, called on Christ's name, and thus restored the queen to health. Instruction in the Christian faith followed.²⁰ It would take some time before subsequently the king was also willing to convert to Christianity and for all practical purposes order a top-down conversion of the whole country. Yet the decisive, initial act that had given Nino entrance to persons who determined Georgia's religious identity was her gaining access to the hearts and minds of women through restoring their children to health.

Native Georgian sources dealing with the country's conversion go into significantly greater detail and provide a more ornate and deeply layered account. Probably the oldest source in Georgian is *მოქცევაჲ ქართლისაჲ* [Mokcevaḡ Kartlisay], or *Conversion of Georgia*, a text extant in four manuscripts.²¹ It consists of two main parts, a *Chronology of the Conversion of Georgia* and a *Life of Saint Nino*. The latter of the two is known from several further redactions, including *The Conversion of Kart'li by Nino*, which is part of the collection *Life [that is, History] of Georgia* (*ქართლის ცხოვრება* [Kart'lis C'xovreba]), and which was

19. This method of healing may reflect a background of shamanistic practices. See, for example, the discussion in Françoise Thelamon, *Païens et Chrétiens au IV^e siècle—L'apport de l'"Histoire ecclésiastique" de Rufin d'Aquilée* (Paris: Etudes augustinienes, 1981), 107–18, who sees Nino as a *kadag*, a prophetic shamanistic healer. Yet it might be sufficient to understand the representation of Nino as simply imitating the healing ministry of Old Testament prophets or of Jesus. While reference to Nino's hair shirt is meant to identify her as a person who lived ascetically, it also might have been intended to establish some hagiographical connection to the tradition of Jesus' *chiton* and Elijah's mantle, both items having been believed to have found their final resting place in Georgia.

20. For further details concerning subsequent events, see Horn, "St. Nino and the Christianization," 250–52.

21. For a recent comparative study of the evidence of the four manuscripts, see Zaza Alexidze, "Four Recensions of the 'Conversion of Georgia (Comparative Study),' in *Die Christianisierung des Kaukasus*, 9–16. For a study of critical vocabulary in this work, see Zaza Alexidze, "Sur le vocabulaire de la *Conversion du Kart'li: Miap'ori, Niap'ori ou Minap'ori?*," in *From Byzantium to Iran: Armenian Studies in Honour of Nina G. Garsoïan*, 47–52.

likely authored anonymously in the eighth or ninth century, and redacted by Leonti Mroveli, bishop of Ruisi, in the eleventh century.²²

The author of *The Conversion of Kart'li by Nino* tells that having come from Jerusalem and having witnessed the martyrdom of Armenia's co-evangelizer Rhipsime, Nino had heard a voice instructing her to "arise and go to the north, where the harvest is abundant but there is no laborer."²³ In Georgia, the northern country, Nino publicly brought down the statues of pagan idols, yet here the reader also notices that conversion of hearts only took place once Nino was able to work miracles that pertained to children. What readers of Georgian historiography were being told had happened was the following.

Nino had found shelter and hospitality with Anasto, the wife of the keeper of the royal garden in Kart'li.²⁴ Anasto and her husband were suffering great distress because they were childless.²⁵ In a dream, Nino received instructions to take earth from a certain spot under a "small bush under the pine trees, planted there for the Lord" and give it to the couple to eat. Thus they were promised to "have a child."²⁶ Administering the earth to them, Nino also catechized the two and promised that their desire for offspring would be fulfilled. Thus

22. Yet scholarship does continue at times to ascribe *The Conversion of Kart'li by Nino* to Leonti Mroveli as its original author. On Leonti Mroveli, see K. Kekelidze, P. Michael Tarchnīšvili, and Julius Assfalg, *Geschichte der kirchlichen georgischen Literatur*, Studi e Testi 185 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1955), 92, who opt for the first half of the eighth century. Yet see also Robert W. Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History: The Medieval Armenian Adaptation of the Georgian Chronicles: The Original Georgian Texts and the Armenian Adaptations*, Oxford Oriental Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), xxxix; and Mgaloblishvili and Gagoshidze, "Jewish Diaspora," 39.

The Georgian text of the *Conversion of Kart'li by Nino* was published by Simon Qauxch'ishvili, *ქართლის ცხოვრება*, 2 vols. (Tbilisi: Saxelgami, 1955 and 1959), 1:72–138. This text is reprinted in Stephen H. Rapp, Jr., ed., *Kart'lis c'xovreba: The Georgian Royal Annals and Their Medieval Armenian Adaptation*, 1:72–138. For an English translation of this text, see Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History*, 84–153. For discussions concerning the manuscript evidence, see also Cyril Toumanoff, "The Oldest Manuscript of the Georgian Annals: The Queen Anne Codex (QA), 1479–1495," *Traditio* 5 (1947): 340–44; and Stephen H. Rapp, *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography: Early Texts and Eurasian Contexts*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 601, Subsidia t. 113 (Lovanii: Peeters, 2003), 17–35.

23. *Conversion of Kart'li by Nino* 85 (Qauxch'ishvili, ed., *ქართლის ცხოვრება*, 1:85, ll. 2–3; Thomson, trans., *Rewriting Caucasian History*, 94 [spelling modified]): "აღდეგ და კიდოდე ჩრდილოთ—კერძო, სადა—იგი არს სამკალი ფრიად და მუშაკი არა."

24. *Conversion of Kart'li by Nino* 93 (Qauxch'ishvili, ed., *ქართლის ცხოვრება*, 1:93; Thomson, trans., *Rewriting Caucasian History*, 101–2).

25. *Conversion of Kart'li by Nino* 93 (Qauxch'ishvili, ed., *ქართლის ცხოვრება*, 1:93, ll. 15–16; Thomson, trans., *Rewriting Caucasian History*, 102): ბოლო იყვნეს ესე ანასტო და ქმარი მიხი უშვილო და ხრუნვიდეს ფრიად უშვილობისათჳს.

26. *Conversion of Kart'li by Nino* 93–94 (Qauxch'ishvili, ed., *ქართლის ცხოვრება*, 1:93, l. 17–94, l. 2; Thomson, trans., *Rewriting Caucasian History*, 102): დადილო არს ნცირე ნამუთა ქუეშე, საუფლო შეხავებული, მიწა აღიდე მის აღდილისაგან, შეაჭანე კაცთა მავათ და ესუას შვილო.

"husband and wife confessed" faith in "Christ and became secret pupils (of Nino's),"²⁷ indeed constituting her first converts in Georgia. The promise of offspring had opened up the hearts of the people and thus had opened up the doors for the missionary.

The traditions surrounding Georgia's initial conversion to Christianity at the hands of a female missionary both in the earliest and in later medieval sources reveal that the key step and foundational success in the missionary's activity were seen as intrinsically connected to miracles as acts of divine intervention. Yet one is dealing here not merely with miracles as such, but with specific miracles that restore imbalances or fulfill needs in people's lives related to children. The basic historicity of the early work of a woman as missionary among the Georgians is quite well established.²⁸ It is certainly possible that the gender of the missionary played a role in selecting family contexts as the initial missionary field, especially since one notices that the female missionary is portrayed as interacting successfully with women who were concerned about their children's health or their own infertility.

Yet Georgian sources also witness to the effectiveness of healing miracles of children in bringing about conversion to Christianity in male adults. The *Life of David of Garesja*, one of the Syrian fathers who established asceticism in Georgia, features events that purport to date to the late fifth to early sixth century.²⁹ Yet it took more than four hundred years before Catholicos Arsenius II of Georgia composed or more likely reworked earlier compositions of the literary accounts of

27. *Conversion of Kart'li by Nino* 94 (Qauxch'ishvili, ed., *ქართლის ცხოვრება*, 1:94, l. 7; Thomson, trans., *Rewriting Caucasian History*, 102); მამინ ცოლ-ქმართა მათ აღიარეს ქრისტე და დაემოწაუნეს ფარულად. David Marshall Lang, *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1956), offers episodes from the *Georgian Life of St. Nino* on 19–39, but leaves out this passage on 24. See also Marjory and Oliver Wardrop, "The Life of St. Nino," *Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica* 5:1 (1900): 22–23. The most recent translation of მოქცევაი ქართლისაი [Moktsevey Kartlisay] by Lerner, *The Wellspring of Georgian Historiography*, 166–67, however, includes the parallel passage. For the Georgian text, see "მოქცევაი ქართლისაი [Moktsevey Kartlisay]," in I. Abuladze, ed., ძველი ქართული აგიოგრაფიული ლიტერატურის ძეგლები [Dzveli kartuli agiografiuli literaturis dzegelebi; *Monuments of Old Georgian Hagiographical Literature*] (Tbilisi: Mec'niereba, 1964), 1:81–163, here 122–23.

28. See the discussion in Horn, "St. Nino and the Christianization"; and von Lilienfeld, "Amt und geistliche Vollmacht der heiligen Nino."

29. For studies of asceticism in Georgia, see Paul Peeters, "Histoire monastiques géorgiennes," *Analecta Bollandiana* 36–37 (1917–19), [the study comprises the whole volume]; Gregory Peradze, "Die Anfänge des Mönchtums in Georgien," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 46:1 (1927): 34–75; and Oliver Reisner, "Das Mönchtum im frühmittelalterlichen Georgien," *Georgia* 15:1 (1992): 67–81.

these Syrian saints' lives at the end of the tenth century.³⁰ The *Life of David of Garesja* includes an episode featuring the encounter between the saint and a barbarian, who threatened to kill David. Miraculously overcome physically by the saint's power, however, the barbarian realized the might of God in whose service David stood and began to ask for healing for his "son at home [who was] lame in both legs and completely unable to get up."³¹ Indeed, as soon as the barbarian had "arrived at his home . . . this lame child of his, which used to crawl on all fours, walked happily out to meet his father."³² Overjoyed, the father "offered up thanks to God,"³³ returned to David with "donkeys [loaded] with great quantities of stores, including bread and vegeta-

30. Lang, *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 81; and Kekelidze, Tarchnišvili, and Assfalg, *Geschichte der kirchlichen georgischen Literatur*, 108. For a relatively accessible modern translation into French and study of the *Lives of the Thirteen Syrian Fathers*, see Bernadette Martin-Hisard, "Les Treize Saints Pères: Formation et évolution d'une tradition hagiographique géorgienne (VIe–XIIe s.)," *Revue des études géorgiennes et caucasiennes* 1 (1985): 141–65; and 2 (1986): 75–111. A fire in the Church of St. George in Saint Catherine's Monastery on Sinai in 1975 brought to light a collection of theretofore seemingly lost manuscripts, many of them in Georgian. The facsimile edition of one of them, MS N Sinai 50 written early in the tenth century, has now made available to researchers what likely is the oldest available text of the *Lives* of these thirteen Syrian fathers. See *Le nouveau manuscrit géorgien sinaïtique N Sin 50: Édition en fac-similé*, intro. Zaza Aleksidzé, trans. from the Georgian J.-P. Mahé, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 596, Subsidia 108 (Louvain: Peeters, 2001). See there, pages 12 and 59 for dating the manuscript and 4–5 on the circumstances of the discovery. For further discussion of the manuscript and its discovery, see also Zaza Aleksidzé, "The New Recensions of the Conversion of Georgia and the Lives of the 13 Syrian Fathers Recently Discovered on Mt Sinai," in *Il Caucaso: Cerniera fra culture dal Mediterraneo alla Persia (secoli IV–XI)*; 20–26 Aprile, 1995, ed. Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo* 43a (Spoleto: [at the center], 1996), 409–26. For other valuable data that can be derived from the manuscript evidence, especially with a view towards the relationship of individual ethnic groups to one another in medieval Georgia, see Zaza Aleksidzé, "La construction de la KAEIΣOYPA d'après le nouveau manuscrit Sinaïtique N° 50," in *Travaux et Mémoires* 13, ed. Gilbert Dragon (Paris: Collège de France, Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2000), 673–81.
31. *Life of David of Garesja* (ed. "ცხოვრება და მოქალაქობა წმიდისა მამისა წყენისა დავით გარეჯელისა [Tsxovrebay da mokalakobay ts'midisa mamisa čuenisa davit garesjelisa]," in Abuladze, ed., *ძველი ქართული აგიოგრაფიული ლიტერატურის ძეგლები [Dzveli kartuli agiograpiuli literaturis dzegelebi; Monuments of Old Georgian Hagiographical Literature]*, 1:229–40, here 235, ll. 22–24; D. M. Lang, partial trans., "A Forerunner of St. Francis: David of Garesja," in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 83–93, here 90): არს სახლსა შინა ჩემსა ძე ჩემი კოჭლი ობითავე ფერვირა რომელი ყოლად ვერ შემძლეძელ არს ზე აღდგომად.
32. *Life of David of Garesja* (ed. "ცხოვრება და მოქალაქობა წმიდისა მამისა წყენისა დავით გარეჯელისა," 235, ll. 34–35; Lang, trans., "Forerunner," in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 90): რამეთუ ყრმა იგი კოჭლი, ბლუნვით მავალი სახარულით წინა მიეგებოდა მამასა მას თჳსსა.
33. *Life of David of Garesja* (ed. "ცხოვრება და მოქალაქობა წმიდისა მამისა წყენისა დავით გარეჯელისა," 235, l. 36; Lang, trans., "Forerunner," in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 90): მადლობა შეწირა ღმრთისა.

The time at which these two stories were redacted coincides with the period in the history of Georgia and the Caucasus when Islam had established its domination. For the hagiographer and historiographer, and also for those who reworked earlier material into a new narrative, the occurrences of the pattern of the healing of children aided in establishing a solid connection between family life and the Christian Church. This topos of the conversion of a child served the Christian authors well in their attempts to respond to the problem of the continued presence of non-Christians long after the work of Nino or of male saints like David had been accomplished.

As much as missionary success among the Georgians is presented as having been related to the respective missionary's ability to mediate God's aid for children, so also does one notice that the earliest

35. *Life of David of Garesja* (ed. „ცხოვრება და მოქალაქეობა წმინდის შავერისა შავერისა და დავით გარეჯელისა,” 236, ll. 8–9; Lang, trans., “Forerunner,” in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 90); და თანაჰყუა ძეცა იგი განკურნებული და ორნი ძენი სხუანი.

Georgian hagiographical accounts center on children, or feature saints as primarily proving their effectiveness with God by providing the childless with children. The *Martyrdom of Queen Shushanik*, composed by Jacob of Tsurta between 476 and 483 C.E. and as such “the oldest surviving work of Georgian literature,”³⁶ not only features again women in a prominent position in Georgian hagiography. The reader also notices that in the list of favors granted to men and women who approached Shushanik for help through her intercession, Shushanik’s prayer for bestowing “a child to the childless”³⁷ ranked first among all the requests. Giving “healing to the sick; and to the blind, restoration of sight” only appeared in the second and third places.³⁸ The desire for children, and a female saint’s effectiveness in fulfilling that need, are placed in pronounced positions in these early medieval Georgian literary traditions.

In ancient society intense concern for obtaining offspring in the first place and then for one’s offspring’s health was connected with the greater threat to children’s lives by diseases and other factors that were increasing child mortality.³⁹ Parental emotional attachment to children is another factor that may account for the recurrence of the motif of healings of children in these texts.⁴⁰ The prominence that these Georgian sources give to miracles involving children that lead to

36. Lang, *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 44. For extensive study of the *Martyrdom of Shushanik*, see P. Peeters, “Sainte Sousanik, martyre en Arméno-Géorgie,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 53 (1935): 5–48.

37. Iakob C`urtaveli, *Martyrdom of Shushanik* (ed. “ცამებაი ჴმიდისა შუშანიკისა დედოფლისა [Tsamebay ts`midisa šušanik`isi dedoplisa],” in Abuladze, ed., ძველი ქართველი აგიოგრაფიული ლიტერატურის ძეგლები [Dzveli kartuli agiografiuli literaturis dzegelebi; *Monuments of Old Georgian Hagiographical Literature*], 1:11–29, here 22, l. 27; D. M. Lang, partial trans., “The Passion of St. Shushanik,” in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 45–56, here 54); უშვილთა შვილი. For additional edition and translations, see also Iakob C`urtaveli, *შუშანიკის ცამება* [Šušanik`is tsameba], ed. Ot`ar Egadze (Tbilisi: Xelovneba, 1983), 6–74 (old Georgian), 75–113 (modern Georgian), and 183–224 (English trans. Elisabeth Fuller).

38. Iakob C`urtaveli, *Martyrdom of Shushanik* (ed. “ცამებაი ჴმიდისა შუშანიკისა დედოფლისა,” 22, l. 27; Lang, trans., “Passion of Shushanik,” in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 54); სხეულთა კურნებაი, ბრმათა თუაღთა ახილვაი.

39. Mortality rates of children in the ancient world were very high. Peter Garnsey, “Child Rearing in Ancient Italy,” in *The Family in Italy from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. D. I. Kertzer and R. P. Saller (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991), 48–65, here 51–52, states that “28 percent of those born alive, or 280 out of 1,000 children, died in the course of the first year, and around 50 percent died before the age of ten.” Other scholars place the numbers slightly lower, at about 30–40 percent. See, for example, Mark Golden, “Did the Ancients Care When Their Children Died?,” *Greece and Rome* 35:2 (1988): 152–63, here 155. For further discussion, see also Cornelia B. Horn and John Martens, “Let the Little Ones Come to Me”: *Children in the Early Christian Community* (forthcoming), chap. 1.

40. The question of the extent to which there existed a noticeable level of emotional attachment between parents and children in earlier centuries continues to be discussed.

adult conversion, however, is remarkable. For early medieval Georgian society, concern for the well-being of one's offspring emerges from the hagiographical sources as a vital element.

Some aspects of children and conversion that arise from these stories are familiar. The report that the healing of a child won the trust of Georgian adults could have been set in any age. The establishment of even rudimentary health care facilities is a strategy of missionaries today that is so common that it needs no documentation. In the case of Nino and the conversion of the Georgians, the point of contact between a woman missionary and her Georgian neighbors was through a child. This motif occurs elsewhere in Christian literature: the miracles that Mary and Jesus perform in the many infancy gospels from late antiquity and even more so in their medieval developments all involve children and their mothers; men are virtually absent from the picture.⁴¹ This suggests that the divisions between men on the one hand and women on the other did not merely coincide with the divisions of labor. It also reflects the segregation of women and men in these societies. In the initial stages of her work, Nino would not jeopardize her missionary task through direct contact with unescorted men. Unconsciously or not, the hagiographer included an observation on the social relationship between men and women and the proximity of children to each of their parents. If this observation is correct, then it implies that the conversion of Georgia took place first through women and wives who then related their experience of the saint to their husbands. In the context of the conversion of the king of Georgia, the conversion of a mother with child perhaps lends popular legitimacy to the king's decision, and thus to the ruling classes and to Georgia as an independent (Christian) state, at least in the opinion of those who might hear this story.

The separation of the sexes that could be discerned from stories of the healing of children in which Nino participated is also born out from the hagiography of males. David of Garesja is one example. Perhaps stereotypically, David first had to overcome the male barbarian physically. The barbarian associated David's physical strength with divine favor, and he asked David to heal his son. Nino did not have to wrestle women for respect before they presented their sick

While scholars initially tended to dismiss the existence of such relationships, more recently they make a case for it.

41. See Cornelia B. Horn, "From Model Virgin to Maternal Intercessor: Mary, Children, and Family Problems in Late Antique Infancy Gospel Traditions," paper delivered at the conference on "Christian Apocryphal Texts for the New Millennium: Achievements, Prospects, and Challenges," University of Ottawa, convener: Pierluigi Piovanelli (fall, 2006), forthcoming in conference proceedings.

children to her. Thus, there is clearly a presentation of gender expectations that Christianity in Georgia did not transcend. The male hero must first conquer the "unknown savage" before reconciling with him, a trope that goes back in literature as far as Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Behind the epic posture of this tale there is a hint of the concepts of "man" and "woman" and "husband" and "wife" that the story of David of Garesja and other Christian hagiography share with their literary forerunners. Moreover, the fact that the father presented to David of Garesja his son and not a daughter may also be indicative of the division of child rearing responsibilities within these families.

The concern not only for children's well-being, but also for their proper function as transmitters of the family's tradition, including the religious tradition, was a further and a significant concern of Georgian culture and one which Georgians shared with other peoples in the Caucasus. The centrality of this theme is to be noted already in the earliest strands of Georgian literature. It is visible in scenes that illustrate children's attempts at changing religions, as the following section shall show in greater detail. In later periods, particularly during the Arab occupation of Georgia, the appeal to "family tradition" may have had quite a different rhetorical force. To persuade Georgian families to withstand conversion and persecution, these stories would have pricked the reader with the thought that the traditions of Georgia are Christian traditions, and have been since the days in which their ancestors—and their ancestors' children—had experienced the truth of Christianity through healing. The death of children for the Christian faith, told most notably in the graphic tale of the martyrs of Kola, represents the fullest expression of the power of Christian conversion. In a later context, it is not difficult to imagine that the story of the murder of Christian children by their own non-Christian parents could serve as a parable for the destructive force of the parents' conversion to Islam and the limitations this brought down upon their children and upon the future of the nation, at least in the perspective of those who maintained and disseminated these earlier hagiographies.

II. CHILDREN MARTYRS AS THE MARK OF THE EARLY STAGES OF CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY

Throughout the history of Christianity, children shared in the fate of martyrdom.⁴² In the eyes of tradition, children were suffering death

42. Scholars are only beginning to explore the question of children's participation in the early and late ancient Christian experience of martyrdom. For first steps into this new field of research, see Cornelia B. Horn, "Fathers and Mothers Shall Rise Up Against

for their affiliation with Christ already from the very beginning of Christian history. The New Testament account in Matthew 2:16–18 with its allusion to King Herod's massacre of boys in Bethlehem who were two years of age and younger may be seen as the earliest instance of violent death inflicted on children for the sake of Christ. Yet the Bethlehemite slaughter was not the only time when children suffered martyrdom. Rather it functioned as the precedent for similar instances in subsequent centuries and in other parts of the world.

Georgian tradition preserves the memory of the probably late-fourth-century c.e. martyrdom of a group of nine children from a village of the Kola valley, in the area of modern-day Göle, northeastern Turkey.⁴³ Local Christians still remembered the site of the children's burial at the spring named "Aiazma."⁴⁴ Based on a tenth-century manuscript that is kept on Mount Athos, Nikolai Marr published the brief account of their martyrdom in 1903.⁴⁵

The anonymous hagiographer described how the desire to join their young Christian playmates at the liturgy in the village church had enticed nine pagan boys, age seven to nine, to convert to Christianity and seek baptism. The young pagans received instruction and in the dark and frosty cold of a winter night they were baptized by the village priest in the River Kura. The hagiographer's comment on the priest who did not dare to conduct a baptism during the day "for fear

Their Children and Kill Them': Martyrdom and Children in the Early Church," paper delivered at the session "Early Christian Families," American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Toronto, Canada (November, 2002); see now also Horn and Martens, *Let the Little Ones Come to Me*, chap. 6; for children facing difficult situations in their lives, see Alexandre-Bidon and Lett, *Les Enfants au Moyen Age*, 61–72.

43. For a study of the valley with useful maps, see Vazken L. Parsegian, "The Vale of Kola: A Final Preliminary Report on the Marchlands of Northeast Turkey," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 42 (1988): 119–41. For the origins of the name "Kola" as a derivation from "Kulha," a name that Urartians had given to a group of invaders, see Parsegian, "The Vale of Kola," 122. Parsegian provides excerpts from the *Martyrdom of the Children of Kola* with English translation on pages 120–21. Two earlier reports on the Marchlands by the same author are published in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 39 and 40.
44. From the Greek ἀνάστα. E. Taqaišvili, *Die archäologische Expedition nach Kola-Olt'isi und Çargali im Jahre 1907* (Paris, 1907), 9; referenced in Kekelidze, Tarchnišvili, and Assfalg, *Geschichte der kirchlichen georgischen Literatur*, 402, n. 2.
45. The Georgian text of the *Martyrdom of the Children of Kola* can be found as "მარტვლობაი ერმათა კოლაელთაი [Martwlobay qrmata kolaeltay]," in Abuladze, ed., ძველი ქართველი აგიოგრაფიული ლიტერატურის ძეგლები [Dzveli kartuli agiograpiuli literaturis dzegelebi; *Monuments of Old Georgian Hagiographical Literature*], 1:183–85. See also N. Y. Marr, "Mučeničestvo otrokov' Kolaicev'," in *Teksty i Razyskanija po Armjano-Gruzinskoj Filologii* (St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg University, 1903), 5:55–61. An English translation is available as D. M. Lang, "The Nine Martyred Children of Kola," in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 40–43. See also Kekelidze, Tarchnišvili, and Assfalg, *Geschichte der kirchlichen georgischen Literatur*, 401–3. For some discussion of the *Martyrdom of the Children of Kola*, see also Vach'nadze, სასწრაფო ხსენება, 91–92.

of the pagans” presented Christians as being on the defensive against a powerful non-Christian presence. Consequently, tradition elevated the young martyrs to the rank of protomartyrs, that is, the rank of those who were the first to die for their faith in Christ in their country. Moreover, the baptism of children featured in this narrative suggests that baptizing children was a typical occurrence in the Georgian Church from the earliest years of its inception onwards.⁴⁶ The hagiographer even stated that “the Christian children were the[.] god-fathers” of the newly baptized.⁴⁷ He was writing in a context in which assuming spiritual responsibility for another person was not thought of as something impossible for a younger child.

At their baptism, the nine boys also changed their family allegiance, living among Christians from then on. After suggesting that their parents had noticed what had happened, the hagiographer vividly described the violent treatment that the children suffered at their parents’ hands. Asserting their authority, the parents “forcibly dragged those children from the Christians’ houses with many insults and [much] wrath”⁴⁸ and “beat them black and blue.”⁴⁹ They tried to force their sons to eat food sacrificed to idols and attempted to bribe them to do so by promising them brightly colored clothes, without success. Out of their wits, the parents eventually went to the local governor, who declared that since the children were their sons, the

46. On the debate concerning the beginnings and practice of the baptism of children, even infants, in early Christianity, see Horn and Martens, “*Let the Little Ones Come To Me*,” chap. 7.

47. *Martyrdom of the Children of Kola* (ed. “მარტვლობაი ერმათა კოლაელთაი,” 184, l. 39; Lang, trans., “Nine Martyred Children,” in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 42): და ერმანი იგი ქრისტეანენი ეკმნეს მათნათლის დადა. For studies of the development of the institution of godparents in the early Church, see Ernst Dick, “Das Pateninstitut im altchristlichen Katechumenat,” *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 63 (1939): 1–49, who indicates that both men and women were allowed to be godparents; and Christiane Brusselmans, “Les fonctions de parrainage des enfants aux premiers siècles de l’Eglise (100–550)” (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1964) (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microforms, 1965). The topic is investigated for the medieval period by Joseph H. Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986); and Bernhard Jussen, *Patenschaft und Adoption im frühen Mittelalter: künstliche Verwandtschaft als soziale Praxis*, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 98 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1991).

48. *Martyrdom of the Children of Kola* (ed. “მარტვლობაი ერმათა კოლაელთაი,” 184, l. 43–185, l. 1; Eng. trans. my own; see also Lang, trans., “Nine Martyred Children,” in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 42): გამოიტაცნეს ერმანი იგი მძლავრობით სახლებსაგან ქრისტეანეთაისა დიდათა შეურაცხებითა და რისხვითა.

49. *Martyrdom of the Children of Kola* (ed. “მარტვლობაი ერმათა კოლაელთაი,” 185, ll. 2–3; Lang, trans., “Nine Martyred Children,” in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 42): დააღებნეს ჳორცნი მათნი ფიცხლითა მით ცემითა.

parents “had the right to do what [they] like[d] with them.”⁵⁰ Thus on “the day of the supreme sacrifice of the holy ones,”⁵¹ as the hagiographer recounts, the parents threw their young children into a deep hole and without “pity for their own offspring,”⁵² they “smote their [children’s] heads and broke open their skulls,” while many of the people joined them in stoning the children.⁵³ Filled with horror at such merciless violence of parents against their own children, the hagiographer modified the scriptural predictions of Micah 7:6, Matthew 10:35, and Luke 12:53 and stated that “brother shall put brother to death, and the father the son, and fathers and mothers shall rise up against their children and kill them.”⁵⁴

When the governor asserted the parents’ absolute power over their children, approving that they could do with them whatever pleased them, he formulated a principle that functioned as the basis for decision-making in later years as well. Several other medieval Georgian hagiographies contain episodes that feature the necessity of a given person to adhere to the religion in which he or she has been raised from childhood and claim as impossible that anyone could change that religion without punishment. Examples in early medieval Georgian sources illustrate that this principle was at work when state powers attempted to counteract conversion to Christianity both from Mazdaism and from Islam.

50. *Martyrdom of the Children of Kola* (ed. “მარტველობა ერმათა კოლაელთაი,” 185, ll. 14–15; Lang, trans., “Nine Martyred Children,” in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 42): კელმწიფეობა გაქუს, უყავი რაივა გნებაჲს.
51. *Martyrdom of the Children of Kola* (ed. “მარტველობა ერმათა კოლაელთაი,” 185, l. 29; Lang, trans., “Nine Martyred Children,” in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 43 [modified]): დღჲ იგი ღუაწლისაი წმიდათა მათ მოწამეთაი. Note that “holy martyrs” in Lang’s translation corresponds merely to “holy ones” in the Georgian text.
52. *Martyrdom of the Children of Kola* (ed. “მარტველობა ერმათა კოლაელთაი,” 185, ll. 31–32; Lang, trans., “Nine Martyred Children,” in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 43): არა ყვეს წყალობაი შეიღთა მათთათჳს.
53. *Martyrdom of the Children of Kola* (ed. “მარტველობა ერმათა კოლაელთაი,” 185, ll. 29–30; Lang, trans., “Nine Martyred Children,” in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 43): მაშინ უღმრთოთამით მშობელთა მათთა განუხატჳნეს თავნი მათნი და განტყვნეს იგინი. For archaeological evidence regarding more regular burial practices of children in the Caucasus, see for example a tomb containing the skeletons of an adult with the skeleton of a perhaps three- to four-year-old child placed to the left of the adult’s lower left leg. At the head of the child was placed a silver ornament, decorated at the center of a frame of blue glass and seven silver discs of about half an inch in diameter. For a drawing of the arrangement of the skeletons in the tomb, see Ernest Chantre, *Recherches Anthropologiques dans le Caucase*, vol. 3, *Période Historique* (Paris: Ch. Reinwald, Libraire, 1887), 23.
54. *Martyrdom of the Children of Kola* (ed. “მარტველობა ერმათა კოლაელთაი,” 185, ll. 36–38; Lang, trans., “Nine Martyred Children,” in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 43): მისცეს ძმამან ძმაი სიკუდიდ და მამამან შეიღი; და აღდგენ მამა-დედანი შეიღთა მათთა ზედა და მოკლვიდენ მათ.

The anonymous, sixth-century *Martyrdom of Eustace of Mtskheta*, also known as *Martyrdom of Eustace the Cobbler*, illustrates the conflicting relationship between Christian Georgia and Sassanid Persia during the reign of Khusrau Anushirvan (531–79 c.e.).⁵⁵ As a young man, Eustace, the son of a Persian fire-worshipper, had become converted to the Christian faith. When he and a friend by the name of Stephen both were brought before Vezhan Buzmir, the Marzapan of T'bilisi, and were questioned regarding their origin and faith, certain Assyrians witnessed on Stephen's behalf that he was "a countryman of [theirs]" and that "his father and mother and brothers and sisters [were] Christians, and [that] he [was] a Christian, too."⁵⁶ That witness to Stephen's Christian family background resulted in gaining his release and freedom. Yet Eustace told of his upbringing in the religion of the Magians (Georgian: მოგჯ *mogwi*) and that his father and brothers were adherents of that religion as well, but that all his life he had been searching for the truth, even while his father had been trying to instruct him in the Magian religion during the day. "At night," however, "when the Christians rang the bell [Eustace would] go and listen to their liturgy and observe the service which the Christians performed in honour of God,"⁵⁷ and in the end he found the truth in Christianity. In contrast to his reaction to Stephen's account, the Marzapan of T'bilisi responded to Eustace's personal history that included a conversion to Christianity by putting Eustace to death. Changing one's religion and thus deviating from family tradition was not an option. Children changing their religion were seen as a threat to Georgian society; the description of such situations is to be regarded as the antitopos to the planting of the faith and the formation of a Christian family tradition as presented in the *Lives* of Nino and

55. *Martyrdom of Eustace the Cobbler* (ed. "მარტვილობა და მოთმინება წმიდისა ევსტათი მცხეთელისაი [Mart'wilobay da motminebay ts'midisa evst'ati mtsxetelisai]," in Abuladze, ed., ძველი ქართული აგიოგრაფიული ლიტერატურის ძეგლები [Dzveli kartuli agiograpiuli literaturis dzegelebi; *Monuments of Old Georgian Hagiographical Literature*], 1:30–45; D. M. Lang, partial trans., "The Passion of St. Eustace the Cobbler," in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 94–114). For the comments here, see Lang, *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 94. For an alternative edition of the Georgian text, see also M. Sabinin, *Sak'art' ûêlos samot'xe* (St. Petersburg, 1882; reprint T'bilisi: n.p., 1990), 313–22.

56. *Martyrdom of Eustace the Cobbler* (ed. "მარტვილობა და მოთმინება წმიდისა ევსტათი მცხეთელისაი," 35, ll. 18–20; Lang, trans., "Passion of St. Eustace," in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 101): ჩუენი მღაბური არს, მამაი და დედაი და დანი მაგისნი ქრისტეანე არიან და ეგევა ქრისტეანე არს.

57. *Martyrdom of Eustace the Cobbler* (ed. "მარტვილობა და მოთმინება წმიდისა ევსტათი მცხეთელისაი," 35, ll. 29–32; Lang, trans., "Passion of St. Eustace," in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 101): ღამელა ქრისტეანეთა დაძრეკიან, კკლეხიად მივიდი და ვისმენდი ჟამობასა მას მათსა და ვხედევდი მსახურებასა მას ქრისტეანეთასა, რომელსა აკოფადეს ღმრთისათჳს.

David of Garesja. The author of the *Martyrdom of Eustace of Mtskheta* drove home the argument with such an episode taken from Eusatace's youth: if non-Christians, who do not follow the truth, forbid conversion, all the more should Georgian Christians refuse to abandon their "true faith."

A straightforward rejection of Islam is present in the details of the conversion of Abo of Baghdad. John of Saban provided an eyewitness account of the martyrdom of Abo, the Perfumer from Baghdad, who was put to death on January 6, 786.⁵⁸ Abo was "born of the line of Abraham, of the sons of Ishmael and the race of the Saracens (that is, the Arabs),"⁵⁹ but on coming to Georgia at the age of seventeen or eighteen he studied the Christian Scriptures and became a believer.⁶⁰ During the rule of Amir, the Arab governor of T'bilisi, however, Muslims in the city denounced Abo to the ruler as an apostate.⁶¹ When the governor called on Abo to return to Islam, he notably did not argue on the basis of *shirk*, that is apostasy from the Islamic faith that Abo had committed, but rather the governor attempted to exert pressure by admonishing the youth to "get ready to pray according to the faith in which [his] parents [had] brought [him] up."⁶² Yet in the end, all pleading was unsuccessful and Abo died a martyr's death.

58. Iovane Sabanisdze, *Martyrdom of Abo of T'bilisi* (ed. "მარტველობაი პაბო ტფილელისაი [Martwlobay habo t'p'ilelisay]," in Abuladze, ed., ძველი ქართული აგიოგრაფიული ლიტერატურის ძეგლები [Dzveli kartuli agiografiuli literaturis dzegelebi; Monuments of Old Georgian Hagiographical Literature], 1:46–81; D. M. Lang, partial trans., "The Martyrdom of Abo, the Perfumer from Baghdad," in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 115–33). For comments, see Lang, *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 115.

59. Iovane Sabanisdze, *Martyrdom of Abo of T'bilisi* (ed. "მარტველობაი პაბო ტფილელისაი," 56, ll. 13–14; Lang, trans., "The Martyrdom of Abo," in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 117): ესე ნაშობი იყო აბრამეანი ძეთაგან ისმაელისაი ტომისაგან სარკინოზთაისა.

60. Iovane Sabanisdze, *Martyrdom of Abo of T'bilisi* (ed. "მარტველობაი პაბო ტფილელისაი," 56–57; Lang, trans., "The Martyrdom of Abo," in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 118).

61. For studies of the relationship between Georgians and speakers of Arabic, see, for example, Mariam Nanobashvili, "The Development of Literary Contacts between the Georgians and the Arabic Speaking Christians in Palestine from the 8th to the 10th Century," *ARAM Periodical* 15:1 and 2 (2003): 269–74; and Bernadette Martin-Hisard, "Les Arabes en Géorgie occidentale au VIII^e s.: Étude sur l'idéologie politique géorgienne," *Bedi Kartlisa* 40 (1982): 105–38. For relations between Arabic-speaking Muslims and other peoples in the Caucasus, for example, Armenians, during medieval times, see, for example, Bernadette Martin-Hisard, "Domination arabe et libertés arméniennes (VIIe–IXe siècles)," in *Histoire des Arméniens*, ed. Gérard Dédeyan (Toulouse: [privately printed], 1982), 185–214.

62. Iovane Sabanisdze, *Martyrdom of Abo of T'bilisi* (ed. "მარტველობაი პაბო ტფილელისაი," 64, ll. 21–23; Lang, trans., "The Martyrdom of Abo," in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 124): აწ განემზადე და ილოცე შჯულისა მით, რომელითი განგზარდეს მშობლებთა შენთა.

In the cases of Eustace and Abo it is noteworthy that on the part of the secular authorities appeals to restoring allegiance to the religion of one's family tradition are the decisive arguments of action, rather than arguments based on the intrinsic truth or lack thereof of a given religion. Moreover, it is remarkable that in both instances the conversion of the heroes had occurred already during their childhood or during their early youth, even though their martyrdom was to take place only later in life. Early medieval Georgian sources therefore provide the reader with insights into the construction of individual cases of children's religious development and decision-making processes, even against the odds of family structures and constraints.

The stories of conversions brought about through acts involving children as well as the accounts of children's martyrdoms seen in the material discussed in this section also represent a view of children as contributors to the well-being of the family, and as the carriers of the family name. Conversion of children to Christianity in the early stages is attested in the case of the life of David of Garesja, in which the man whose son David healed had his entire family baptized, including children and servants. Yet Christianity also resulted in disruptions. This story of the martyrdom of the children of Kola demonstrates that children were capable of taking responsibility over other young children, perhaps also including siblings. It also shows that the risk of losing children to others was so significant that it meant the destruction of the family name, and that the death of such children was preferable. The Christian children became the godparents of the newly baptized martyrs. This seems to have resulted in the classification of children into a new class, represented by inclusion in the Christian family. The story of the martyrdom of the children of Kola, one of the most popular ones in Georgian hagiography, presents a portrait of children that is at once one of independence and of responsibility to parents and to the expectation that children would carry on the lineage of their ancestors. The local ruler advised the non-Christian parents that they still had legal authority over their newly baptized offspring. At the same time, older children could fill roles of leaders in education and spiritual custody for younger children, a detail which in turn suggests that older children in Georgian society had a fair degree of responsibility up to which they were expected to live. This likely reflects the role of children in agrarian societies, in which child labor and the taking on of responsibility that went along with it were essential.

Given such a significant level of responsibility accorded to children, it is all the more surprising that the parents of the children of Kola would agree to murder their children rather than to tolerate living

with children of another religion. Other stories presented in the material discussed above share this avoidance of “mixed families,” such as the story of the martyrdom of Eustace. These stories suggest that the “shame” and “name” of the family and the central role that children played in jeopardizing or preserving these were as important or even more important than the economic advantage of child labor. These saints’ stories show that children who tarnished the family name through willingly leaving their parents or by adopting a new religion (or one might say a different system of behavior) were perceived as displaying an open rejection of social norms. It was seen as better for the parents to kill their children than to suffer shame in the eyes of their neighbors and associates. The effect of the hagiographer’s message on his audience depended on the recognition of the violation of these norms as a mark of a “new order” that Christianity supposedly introduced into society. However, the evidence suggests that this new order was not total, and that certain aspects of traditional society in Georgia remained. As some details of the following discussion will show, particularly those elements derived from the *Life of Peter the Iberian*, the features of family life that continued comprised at the least certain aspects of accepted norms of marital relationships.

III. CHILDREN’S UPBRINGING AND EDUCATION: CONVERTING AND RAISING THE CHRISTIAN CHILD

One of the most detailed accounts available for any inquiry into early medieval practices of the raising and educating of children is the *Life of Peter the Iberian*. Peter was a native of a ruling family in K`art`li, the eastern and central region of Georgia.⁶³ In ancient sources his Georgian name is given both as Nabarnugios and Murvanos.⁶⁴ Only

63. For an informative and accessible overview of the prehistoric through late antique history of *Iberia secunda*, or the “second Iberia,” the name by which the eastern region of Georgia was known to the ancients, see Heinzgerd Brakmann and Otar Lordkipanidze, “Iberia II (Georgien),” in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 17 (Stuttgart: Hierseman, 1950–), 12–106, here 13. See also David J. Melling, “Peter the Iberian,” in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 377.

64. Nabarnugios in *Vita Petri Iberi* 4, in *Petrus der Iberer: ein Charakterbild zur Kirchen—und Sittengeschichte des 5. Jahrhunderts; syrische Übersetzung einer um das Jahr 500 verfassten griechischen Biographie*, ed. and German trans. Richard Raabe (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1895), 4 of the Syriac text; Cornelia B. Horn and Robert R. Phenix, Jr., ed. and English trans., *Controversial Historiography in Late Antique Palestine: The Works of John Rufus*, Vol. 1, *The Lives of Peter the Iberian, Theodosius of Jerusalem, and the Monk Romanus* (Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007, forthcoming), par. 5; and *Plerophoriae* 56, in *Jean Rufus: Évêque de Maiouma: Plérphories, c.-à-d. témoignages et revelations*, ed. and French trans. F. Nau and M. Brière, *Patrologia Orientalis* 8.1 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1911), 113 (513). Murvanos is used in the “Georgian Life of Peter the Iberian” (Ivan Lolashvili, ed., *არეოპაგეტული კრებულები. დიონისე*

later in his life, when he became a monk in Jerusalem did he receive the new name Peter, a name that operated in a wider hagiographical program of establishing authority for the anti-Chalcedonians, the group of Christians to whom Peter belonged. A discussion of this program is outside the scope of the present article.⁶⁵ For the purposes of this investigation he shall be referred to as Peter. Although this was not his Georgian name, he became best known by it.

Two sources on Peter's life have come down to the modern reader: a Syriac *Life*, originally composed in Greek by John Rufus, a close confidant and longtime friend of Peter, and a Georgian *Life*, which is in itself a translation of another Syriac text that was based again on a Greek *Vorlage*.⁶⁶ Later on, additions to Georgian Chronicles were supplied on the basis of the accounts provided in the Syriac and the Georgian *Lives*.⁶⁷ Given the personal acquaintance between the hero and his biographer, who repeatedly commented that Peter had told him and his other disciples about earlier events and that he had instituted certain practices in the community based on memories he had from his youth in Georgia, one may perhaps assume that there is a kernel of historical truth to what is being told about Peter's upbringing in the Caucasus. The later Georgian *Life* turns the story's hero into a Chalcedonian figure, given Georgia's acceptance of Chalcedonian orthodoxy in early medieval times.⁶⁸ Since religious polemic guided the interest of both texts, albeit in different directions, caution is advisable where details support the overall tendency of the respective author. Otherwise, although neither one of the sources is an original

არეოპაგელი და პეტრე იბერიელი ძველქართულ მწერლობაში გამოხატულებად მოამზადეს ივანე ლოლაშვილმა [Areop'aget'uli k'rebuli: dionise areop'ageli da p'et're iberieli dźverl'kartul mts'erlobaši gamosatsebad moamzada Ivane Lolashvilma] [Tbilisi: Izd-vo "Mets'niereba," 1983], 117–58, here 119, sect. 2) and elsewhere. For a detailed epitome of the *Vita Petri Iberi*, see J. B. Chabot, "Pierre l'Ibérien, Évêque Monophysite de Mayouma [Gaza] à la Fin du V^e Siècle," *Révue de l'Orient Latin* 3 (1895): 367–97.

65. For a monograph-length study of Peter the Iberian and his role in the anti-Chalcedonian movement, see Cornelia B. Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy in Fifth-Century Palestine: The Career of Peter the Iberian*, The Oxford Early Christian Studies Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

66. For further discussion on the origins of this Georgian *Life*, see also David Marshall Lang, "Peter the Iberian and his Biographers," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 2:1 (1951): 158–68; and Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy*, 47–49.

67. For translations of the relevant passages, see Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History*, 359–62. These texts refer to the hero by the name Murvan(os).

68. For some discussion of the changing fate of the memory and commemoration of Peter the Iberian in the Caucasus, see also Andrea B. Schmidt, "Habent sua fata libelli: Georgische Fiktion contra armenische Fälschung: Die Vita Petrus des Iberers im Spannungsfeld zwischen armenischer und georgischer Überlieferung," in *Georgien im Spiegel seiner Kultur und Geschichte: Zweites Deutsch-Georgisches Symposium*, 9. bis 11. Mai 1997, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz; Vortragstexte, ed. Brigitta Schrade and Thomas Ahbe (Berlin: Berliner Georgische Gesellschaft, 1998), 91–95.

Georgian composition, one can use both texts as somewhat reliable witnesses to circumstances of life and customs pertaining to childhood and upbringing in Georgia in the first decades of the fifth century.

As son of King Bosmarios and Queen Bakurduktia⁶⁹ little Peter was among the offspring of the royal family. The biographer of the *Life of Peter the Iberian* that is preserved in Syriac provided a detailed account of the names and ascetic accomplishments of Peter's extended family, including paternal and maternal grandparents, a great-uncle, and an uncle on his father's side, thus presenting a family history for the first century of Georgia's Christian identity.⁷⁰ His paternal uncle Arsilios is also known via evidence contained in the *Georgian Chronicle*.⁷¹ Of particular interest is the information provided in the Syriac *Life* about Peter's half-sister, his own divinely announced birth, his upbringing in a foster family, and the witness supplied in the *Georgian Life* for his early education in a school system.

Rufus did not try to hide the fact that Peter's father Bosmarios had kept a concubine, even though he had a wife who was legally and rightfully married to him.⁷² While Bosmarios's concubine may have

69. *Vita Petri Iberi* 5, in Raabe, ed., *Petrus der Iberer*, 5; Horn and Phenix, ed. and English trans., *Controversial Historiography: John Rufus*, vol. 1, *The Lives of Peter, Theodosius, and Romanus*, par. 6.

70. His paternal grandparents were Bosmarios and Osduktia. His maternal grandparents were Bakurios and Duktia. The great-uncle's name was Pharasmanios, and his father's brother's name was Arsilios. For a fuller discussion of this family background, see Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy*, 50–59.

71. The *Georgian Chronicle* (S. Qauxč'išvili, ed., *K'art'lis C'xovreba anna dedoplišeuli nusxa* [Tbilisi: n.p., 1942], 91) features King Arč'il (A.D. 422–32). According to Moses Khorenats'i (ca. 407–92), *Պարմութիւն Հայոց* [Patmowt'iwn Hayots'; *History of the Armenians*] bk. 3, chap. 60 (Abelean and Yarut'iwnian, ed., *Մուսիսի Խորենացույ Պարմութիւն Հայոց*, 341; Thomson, trans., *Moses Khorenats'i: History of the Armenians*, 333), at the time of Mesrop's sending out of pupils to Byzantium and Edessa as translators of Greek and Syriac literature into Armenian, "a certain Ardzil was king of Georgia." It seems to have been customary for Iberian kings and leaders to share the reign among themselves. That practice applied to the generation of Peter's grandparents and presumably was still in place when Peter's father was king. See *Vita Petri Iberi* 8–9, in Raabe, ed., *Petrus der Iberer*, 8–9; Horn and Phenix, ed. and English trans., *Controversial Historiography: John Rufus*, vol. 1, *The Lives of Peter, Theodosius, and Romanus*, par. 14. This system of government is related to the rule of the nobility (*naxarar*) in Armenia. For a fuller study of this Armenian system and its impact on early medieval society, see Nicholas Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian: The Political Conditions Based on the Naxarar System*, trans., partially rev., and with bibliographical notes and appendices by Nina G. Garsoïan, Haykakan matenashar Galust Kiwlpēnkean Himnarkut'ean (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1970).

72. For studies of the practice of concubinage and the situations of concubines in the early Christian and late antique world, see Joelle Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme à Byzance (4e–7e siècle)*, 1: *Le droit impérial* (Paris: De Boccard, 1990), 195–201; Susan Treggiari, "Concubinae," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 49 (1981): 59–81. See also Judith Evans Grubbs, "Concubinage," in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed.

been one of his royal prerogatives, the fact that he could keep one may also be understood as a sign of his wife's tolerance. Other ancient folk traditions preserved among peoples in the northern Caucasus area also witness to a relative tolerance in matters of sexual fidelity, even in marriages, for both partners.⁷³ In light of Rufus's heightened awareness and positive evaluation of sexual renunciation, which emerges readily from other details in the *Life of Peter the Iberian*, the disclosure of an extramarital relationship of Peter's father may have been rather embarrassing for the story's hero. Thus, the fact that the biographer did not hide it speaks in favor of a certain historical accuracy with which he related what he knew about the family. By this concubine now, Bosmarios had a daughter, named Bosmirosparia. In accord with his father's wishes, Peter was to treat her like a real sister later on.⁷⁴

Historians date Peter's birth to the year 409,⁷⁵ 412, or 417 C.E., with the last being the most likely date.⁷⁶ It is no surprise that the Syriac *Life* treats the birth of the hero as an event announced by the heavens and modeled in accord with biblical precedents. Right from the beginning Peter's life is shown as standing under the influence and mediation of the supernatural realm. One day when Peter's father Bosmarios returned from the countryside, he met a man on the street, an angel in disguise, who announced to him that he would have a son, whose virtuous conduct was to be a shining example for everyone. A son was born soon thereafter, just as the angel had announced. The annunciation of the birth of a holy man or woman by an angel or an

G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 388–89; Kim Power, "Concubine/Concubinage," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999), 222–23; H. Crouzel, "Concubinage," in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1:189; and Judith Herrin and Alexander Kazhdan, "Concubinage," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1:493.

73. See, for example, the story of "How Setenaya Was Led Astray," in *Nart Sagas from the Caucasus: Myths and Legends from the Circassians, Abazas, Abkhaz, and Ubykhs*, assembled, trans., and annotated by John Colarusso, with B. George Hewit and others (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 55–56.

74. *Vita Petri Iberi* 6, in Raabe, ed., *Petrus der Iberer*, 6; Horn and Phenix, ed. and English trans., *Controversial Historiography: John Rufus*, vol. 1, *The Lives of Peter, Theodosius, and Romanus*, par. 8.

75. Chabot, "Pierre l'Ibérien," 370; and Raabe, *Petrus der Iberer*, 10, n., not numbered.

76. Paul Devos, "Quand Pierre l'Ibère vient-il à Jérusalem?," *Analecta Bollandiana* 86 (1968): 337–50, here especially 349. The Georgian "Life of Peter the Iberian" led Honigmann and following him Devos to consider 412 C.E. as a possibility. 417 C.E. still allows one to assume that even as a young boy considering asceticism Peter could have come to some familiarity and first appreciation of and respect for Nestorius of Constantinople, which then turned into manifest aversion. For fuller discussion, see Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy*, 26–27, and 134–37.

otherwise heavenly messenger is a common topos in early Christian literature, patterned after those annunciations of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ,⁷⁷ and well in line with the literary traditions of the birth and early childhood of the *theios aner*, the divine Human Being.⁷⁸

After his birth the infant Peter was handed over into the care of a woman named Zuzo. Zuzo's daughter Ota nursed the child. The Syriac *Life of Peter the Iberian* also mentions Ota's husband, Khuronios, her brother Bardelios, and Ota's and Khuronios's two foster-sons, Qata and Murgaqis.⁷⁹ Later on, when Peter lived as a monk in a monastery near Gaza in Palestine, he included the names of his extended foster family in the liturgical commemoration for his blood relatives. This detail suggests that he had developed a strong personal affection for and gratitude to those who had raised him. It also helps to define the terms "family" and "family structure" as they were understood in the early medieval eastern world, consisting of numerous individuals who were joined to one another even without the bonds of blood relationship.⁸⁰

77. Luke 1:5–25; and Luke 1:26–38. In early Christian literature, also the birth of holy women would occasionally be announced by a heavenly messenger. For the announcement of the special status and character of the to-be-born Macrina as "Thecla" by "a being of greater magnificance in form and appearance than a mortal man," see Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina* 2, in Pierre Maraval, ed., *Grégoire de Nysse: Vie de Sainte Macrine*, Source Chrétiennes 178 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1971), 146; Joan M. Petersen, trans., "A Letter from Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, on the Life of Saint Macrina," in *Handmaids of the Lord: Contemporary Descriptions of Feminine Asceticism in the First Six Christian Centuries* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian, 1996), 51–86, here 53.

78. See, for example, the discussion in Ludwig Bieler, *ΘΕΙΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ. Das Bild des "Göttlichen Menschen" in Spätantike und Frühchristentum* (Wien: Oskar Höfels, 1935 and 1936; reprint Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchhandlung, 1967), 28–42.

79. *Vita Petri Iberi* 6, in *Petrus der Iberer*, ed. Raabe, 6; Horn and Phenix, ed. and English trans., *Controversial Hagiography: John Rufus*, vol. 1, *The Lives of Peter, Theodosius, and Romanus*, par. 9.

80. The study of family life in the early Christian and late antique world has made significant progress over the last two decades. For a study of the role of prayer in family life, see Balthasar Fischer, "Common Prayer of Congregation and Family in the Ancient Church," *Studia Liturgica* 10:3–4 (1974): 106–24. For other useful studies on families, family life, and constructions of family language in the ancient world, see the contributions in Halvor Moxnes, ed., *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (London: Routledge, 1997); as well as the study by Geoffrey Nathan, *The Family in Late Antiquity: The Rise of Christianity and the Endurance of Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2000). See also Robert W. Shaffern, "The Late Antique Family in the Christian East," *Diakonia* 31:1 (1998): 15–30; Carolyn Osiek, "The Family in Early Christianity: 'Family Values' Revisited," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 58:1 (1996): 1–25; James S. Jeffers, "The Influence of the Roman Family and Social Structures on Early Christianity in Rome," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 27 (1988): 370–84; and J. Kevin Coyle, "Empire and Eschaton: The Early Church and the Question of Domestic Relationships," *Église et Théologie* 12 (1981): 35–94.

Peter's wet nurse Ota and her husband raised children who were not their own.⁸¹ While the couple was probably paid for their services, an element of generosity and love expressed by their raising of foster-children remains. In lieu of lack of evidence for an established structure of care for orphaned and abandoned children, one may assume that Georgian society provided for children in need largely by adopting them into existing family structures. The generosity of the couple that raised Peter as a foster-child could also have been one of the factors inspiring the young prince to take on his active role in using his energy and resources to support foreigners, once he had become a pilgrim-monk in Jerusalem. Basil of Caesarea's spirituality and teachings, specifically his great concern for social justice, which became a mark of Cappadocian asceticism,⁸² may well have exerted additional influence on Peter in this regard. It remains to be studied whether Basil's social ideas might have influenced the young Peter's social and charitable conscience while he was still in Georgia.⁸³ Several of the works of Basil of Caesarea were translated into Georgian and were widely used.⁸⁴ The earliest translations of which one seems to have records are those by Euthymius Mt'ac'mideli, to be dated to 977–81

81. It was common practice for wealthy families to hand over their children to wet nurses and foster parents. See, for example, Basil the Great, *Letter 37*, in *Saint Basil: Lettres, Tome I*, ed. and trans. Yves Courtonne (Paris: Société d'édition "Les Belles lettres," 1957), 79–80, here 80; Roy Joseph Deferrari, ed. and trans., *Saint Basil: The Letters*, The Loeb Classical Library, 4 vols. (reprint, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), 192–95; also Sister Agnes Clare Way, trans., *Saint Basil: Letters (Volume 1 [1–185])*, Fathers of the Church 13 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1951), 83, where Basil speaks of the son of his former wet nurse. Yet the role of wet nurses in the early Christian and late antique world has received little scholarly attention. For the contributions made by Suzanne Dixon, see her books *The Roman Mother* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1988), 120–29, and *The Roman Family* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 119, and literature cited there, as well as her earlier work published as "Roman Nurses and Foster-Mothers: Some Problems of Terminology," *AULLA, Papers and Synopses from the 22nd Congress of the Australian Universities Language and Literature Association* 22 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1983), 9–24. For an entertaining account of the choices Erythrios faced when having to secure the nourishing of his just-born son whose mother had passed away when giving birth, see the discussion in Hans Herter, "Amme oder Saugflasche," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, Ergänzungsband 1 (1964): 168–72.
82. See the fine selection of Basil of Caesarea's treatises on ethics and the moral life collected in M. Monica Wagner, trans., *Saint Basil: Ascetical Works*, Fathers of the Church 9 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1950).
83. See Kekelidze, Tarchnišvili, and Assfalg, *Geschichte der kirchlichen georgischen Literatur*, 145 and 147. For an overview of the development of Georgian monasticism, see in addition to the literature cited above in note 29 also Kekelidze, Tarchnišvili, and Assfalg, *Geschichte der kirchlichen georgischen Literatur*, 60–79. The earliest monasteries in Georgia appear under King Vakhtang Gorgasal in the fifth century c.e. See Kekelidze, Tarchnišvili, and Assfalg, *Geschichte der kirchlichen georgischen Literatur*, 61.
84. For help in locating Basil of Caesarea's works in the Georgian tradition, see now the indispensable tool created by Paul Jonathan Fedwick, *Bibliotheca Basiliana Universalis: A*

c.e. Yet given Basil's contacts with Armenia, it cannot be excluded that his ideas had already spread across the border from Cappadocia, and likely also beyond the confines of Armenia. Traditions about the missionary Nino's Cappadocian origins supply a further point of reference for the connections between central Asia Minor and the Caucasus.

The important role of other relatives, including concubines, in family life, at least for nobility, is reflected in much of the material that is derived from Peter's *Life*. His father kept a concubine, a detail which Peter's hagiographer does not report with reproach or shame. This may have been due in part to the social customs of the Caucasus, but it also reflects the degree to which the Christian hagiographer suspended judgment on this common family institution in order to present his subject in the best light. The statement that Peter's father considered Peter's step-sister to be a "full" child in his household reflects on the nobility of Peter's father, and, as the hagiographer was keen to argue here and in many other instances, on Peter himself. Peter's hagiographer was not concerned with sweeping away the old social order with the broom of Christian moralizing through not mentioning certain aspects of Peter's family. The behavior of children—both from wives and from concubines—reflected equally on the nobility of the parents and on their siblings. Establishing a norm of marital relationships was less important to the hagiographer, and thus to his or her audience, than establishing their noble characters. This conforms to the observations made on the story of the children of Kola—family name was more important than economic considerations, for saints as well as for sinners.

Another social structure that aided in the care for children's well-being was that of the monasteries. As Timothy Miller has demonstrated in a study of the fate of orphans in Byzantium, in the Byzantine world monks were active in establishing orphanages and in providing for the direct care for the young.⁸⁵ Recent archaeological research allows one to document more fully the phenomenon that monastic communities functioned as orphanages in the late ancient

Study of the Manuscript Tradition of the Works of Basil of Caesarea (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993–).

85. For the Byzantine realm, see now the valuable study by Timothy S. Miller, *The Orphans of Byzantium: Child Welfare in the Christian Empire* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003). Focusing on the Orphanotropheion in Constantinople, Miller also considers evidence from throughout Asia Minor and the Byzantine provinces. See also his article "The Orphanotropheion of Constantinople," in *Through the Eye of a Needle: Judeo-Christian Roots of Social Welfare*, ed. Emily Albu Hanawalt and Carter Lindberg (Kirksville, Mo.: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1994), 83–104.

and early medieval Christian world.⁸⁶ While early medieval Georgian hagiography does not provide descriptions of cases of ascetics adopting children in need into their cells, examples of how Georgian ascetics, living in the wilderness of the mountains, aided children in need through their prayers of intercession and through their powers of healing are found for example in the *Life of David of Garesja* that was discussed above. The stronger concern to improve the care available for orphaned children may be seen as a feature of an increasingly Christianized society.

Another tool in the process of furthering Christianization in the Caucasus, as likely also elsewhere, was the use made of the transformation of children's education to incorporate if not at times to coincide with instruction in the Christian faith. Peter the Iberian's hagiography provides clues to the linguistic landscape of Georgia in the fifth and sixth centuries and to how language functioned as a means of religious formation of children. The members of the royal family in Georgia may have learned and used Greek as the court language, not only to set themselves apart from ordinary people outside the court, but also for its usefulness in furthering relationships with the Byzantine court. Yet Rufus's account also provides evidence that when the little boy Peter grew up with his foster-family and with his nurse, he understood Georgian, the country's native language. Later in his life, when he had long left home and had moved to Constantinople and after that to Palestine, Peter remembered that his Georgian foster-mother Zuzo used to say a prayer over him every night, "Lord Jesus, my God and Giver of my life, have mercy on me."⁸⁷ Even though the young boy presumably was asleep when Zuzo was praying for him, the tears and laments that accompanied Zuzo's prayer could easily

86. For an example from an early ascetic text witnessing to that phenomenon, see Basil of Caesarea, *Long Rules*, question 15, in ed. and trans. Patrologia Graeca 31.889–1052, here cols. 951–62; M. Monica Wagner, trans., *Saint Basil of Caesarea: Ascetical Works*, 264. See also the illuminating discussion by Blake Leyerle, "Children and Disease in a Sixth Century Monastery," in *What Athens Has to Do with Jerusalem: Essays on Classical, Jewish, and Early Christian Art and Archaeology in Honor of Gideon Foerster*, ed. Leonard V. Rutgers, Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion 1 (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 349–72. For earlier work on the presence of children in Saint Stephen's Monastery, see also Rebecca A. Sanders and Susan Guise Sheridan, "'All God's Children': Subadult Health in a Byzantine Jerusalem Monastery," abstract in *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, Supplement 28 (1999): 239; and J. Cheadle and Susan Guise Sheridan, "Non-Metric Dental Variation in Remains from a Byzantine Monastic Community in Jerusalem," abstract in *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, Supplement 28 (1999): 105–6.

87. *Vita Petri Iberi* 11, in Raabe, ed., *Petrus der Iberer*, 11; Horn and Phenix, ed. and English trans., *Controversial Historiography: John Rufus*, vol. 1, *The Lives of Peter, Theodosius, and Romanus*, par. 17.

have woken him up, at least occasionally, and he would have listened to and understood her words. Certainly, one needs to read stories like this one also within the confines of hagiographical topoi. Yet what is of interest for literary historiography is that the form and content of this prayer clearly is an instance of the so-called "Jesus-Prayer."⁸⁸ In fact, this is one of the earliest attestations of this prayer in Christian literature. Rufus explicitly states that Zuzo said the words in the Iberian language.⁸⁹ The prayer, which she uttered when an earthquake was threatening to destroy her house and put an end to the lives of her beloved ones, was likely also formulated in Georgian. Although the text of the Syriac *Life* does not explicitly state it, the fact that the second prayer is mentioned immediately following the one Zuzo used to say in Georgian every night over the infant Peter suggests that she used to pray in Georgian regularly, and the little child understood and remembered what she was saying. The reader may gather from this detail valuable evidence for practices of religious formation of young children in early medieval Georgia.

The Georgian *Life* also provides some evidence for the establishment of schools in the country. When Peter moved to the court in Constantinople, and there had opportunity to further his education at the renowned institutions of higher learning in the city, including Emperor Constantine's university founded in the Byzantine capital in 330 C.E.,⁹⁰ he may already have had received some basic schooling in his home country in the Caucasus.⁹¹ The Georgian *Life* speaks of the სამწიგნობრე (samts'ignobred), that is, the "school" that the young child attended from age three onwards. Thus when the child came to Constantinople at age twelve, he not only had reached the proper age for the pursuit of academic wisdom, but also had been appropriately prepared at home to take full benefit of the improvements Emperor Theodosius II had made in 425 C.E. in developing further the organizational structure of the university founded by Emperor Constan-

88. Irénée Hausherr, *The Name of Jesus: The Names of Jesus Used by Early Christians: The Development of the 'Jesus Prayer'* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian, 1978), 266, refers to this text, but does not recognize its importance as a very early instance of the "Jesus-Prayer."

89. *Vita Petri Iberi* 11, in Raabe, ed., *Petrus der Iberer*, 11; Horn and Phenix, ed. and English trans., *Controversial Historiography: John Rufus*, vol. 1, *The Lives of Peter, Theodosius, and Romanus*, par. 17.

90. R. Janin, *Constantinople Byzantine: développement urbain et répertoire topographique*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1964), 164.

91. See N. Y. Marr, ed. and trans., "Chovreba Petre Iverisa [Life of Peter the Iberian]," *Pravoslavnyy Palestinsky Sbornik* 47 (=XVI.2) (St. Petersburg: n.p., 1896), 1–78, here par. 5, p. 5 (Georgian text); "Georgian Life of Peter the Iberian" (Lolashvili, ed., *Areopagetuli krebuli*, p. 119, sect. 2). See also the brief discussion in Kekelidze, Tarchnišvili, and Assfalg, *Geschichte der kirchlichen georgischen Literatur*, 57.

tine.⁹² The fifth-century Georgian *Martyrdom of Queen Shushanik* provides circumstantial evidence for the great concern Christians in Georgia placed on furthering the education of the young, both in the realm of religion and in worldly affairs. When in distress, Shushanik for example taught her children through her example: "She took with herself her three sons and one daughter and brought them before the altar" for prayer at the time of the evening service.⁹³ The author of the text, being an eyewitness to the events, felt he had to remind one of Shushanik's servants, who was hesitant to bring help to his mistress in need, that he owed her much: "Did she not raise you?"⁹⁴

Given Shushanik's Armenian background and the known dedication among Armenians to the furtherance of the education of the young, a passage found in Armenian historiography, here Agathangelos's *Պատմութիւն Հայոց* (*Patmowt'iwn Hayots'; History of the Armenians*), is of interest to illustrate how, on occasion, Christian texts from the Caucasus provide accounts of systematic attempts that were made to instruct children in the Christian faith and at the same time to provide them with an education.⁹⁵ The Eastern Church historian Agathangelos told of missionary efforts already recorded in the fifth-century Koriun's *Life of Mashtots*⁹⁶ and spoke more directly of the

92. Janin, *Constantinople Byzantine*, 164. On the history in the context of which Theodosius II's "Higher School" or "University," founded on February 27, 425, has to be placed, see F. Schemmel, "Die Hochschule von Konstantinopel im IV. Jahrhundert," *Neue Jahrbücher für Pädagogik* 22 (1908): 147–68; L. Bréhier, "Notes sur l'histoire de l'enseignement supérieur à Constantinople," *Byzantion* 3:1 (1926): 73–94; and 4:1 (1927): 13–28; L. Bréhier, "L'enseignement classique et l'enseignement religieux à Byzance," *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 21:1 (1941): 34–69; M. J. Kyriakides, "The University: Origin and Early Phases in Constantinople," *Byzantion* 41 (1971): 161–82; for further literature, see also Nicholas P. Constan, "Four Christological Homilies of Proclus of Constantinople: Introduction, Critical Edition, Translation, and Commentary" (Ph. D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1994), 7–8, n, 19.

93. Iakob C'urtaveli, *Martyrdom of Shushanik* (ed. "ცამეპაი წმიდისა შუშანიკისა დედოფლისა," 13, ll. 1–2; Lang, trans., "Passion of Shushanik," in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 46): თანა მოიყვანნა სამნი იგი ძენი მისნი და ერთი ასული და წარადგინნა ივინი წინაშე საკურთხეველსა და ესრეთ ილოცვიდი და იტყოდა.

94. Iakob C'urtaveli, *Martyrdom of Shushanik* (ed. "ცამეპაი წმიდისა შუშანიკისა დედოფლისა," 18, l. 7; Lang, trans., "Passion of Shushanik," in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 50): არა მისი განზრდილი ხარა.

95. For the following discussion of the material from Agathangelos, see also Horn and Martens, "Let the Little Ones Come to Me," chap. 4. For a study of the role of the development of the alphabet in the process of the Christianization of Armenia, see Boghos Levon Zekiyan, "Die Christianisierung und die Alphabetisierung Armeniens als Vorbilder kultureller Inkarnation, besonders im subkaukasischen Gebiet," in *Die Christianisierung des Kaukasus*, 189–98.

96. R. W. Thomson, *Agathangelos: History of the Armenians* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1976), 494–95, for identification of passages that Agathangelos took over directly from Koriun.

formal, catechetical school system in the Christian east, specifically in Armenia:

Similarly he [that is, Gregory the Illuminator] persuaded the king that from every province and region they should bring to various places numbers of children [մանկրի *mankti*, gen sg. մանկրոյ *manktway*] in order to instruct them. So these barbarous, savage, and wild natives he took and cast into the furnace of instruction, and by the heat of his spiritual love burnt away the impurity and rust of the putrid demons and vain cults.⁹⁷

In this context, Agathangelos also described the Armenian school system and method of teaching at the time:

And from every place within the borders of Armenia and from the lands and provinces of his realm king Trdat commanded many young children [մանկրի *mankti*, gen sg. մանկրոյ *manktway*] to be introduced to the art of writing and faithful teachers to be put in charge. Especially the families of the impure pagan priests and their children [մանուկ *manowk*, nom. pl. մանկուն *mankown*] were to be brought together in groups in suitable places, and an adequate stipend paid to them. These he divided into two groups, some being set to Syriac and others to Greek. Thus in the twinkling of an eye these savage and idle and oafish peasants suddenly became acquainted with the prophets and familiar with the apostles and heirs to the gospel and fully informed about all the traditions of God.⁹⁸

According to Agathangelos, Gregory the Illuminator had a particular interest in reeducating families of the religious leaders of pagan Armenia. Thus he also “took some of the pagan priests’ sons [որդի *ordi*, abl. pl. յորդոց *yordwots`*] and brought them up in his own sight and under his own care, giving them instruction and raising them with spiritual care and fear.”⁹⁹ Subsequently, several of them were ordained as bishops for the newly established Christian Church.

Gregory the Illuminator is shown as displaying a keen sense for how to transform a religious system from the inside. Although one needs to take note of his church-political strategy, it is obvious that this catechetical system was the means by which children were introduced both to the Christian religion and also directly to education.

97. Agathangelos, Պատմութիւն Հայոց [Patmowt'iwn Hayot's]/History of the Armenians §839 (Thomson, Armenian text and trans., *Agathangelos: History of the Armenians*, 372–73).

98. Agathangelos, Պատմութիւն Հայոց [Patmowt'iwn Hayot's]/History of the Armenians §840 (Thomson, Armenian text and trans., *Agathangelos: History of the Armenians*, 374–75).

99. Agathangelos, Պատմութիւն Հայոց [Patmowt'iwn Hayot's]/History of the Armenians §845 (Thomson, Armenian text and trans., *Agathangelos: History of the Armenians*, 378–79 [translation modified]).

As shown above, in hagiographical accounts healing was an important tool of creating trust between members of a community, and this probably coincided with some real aspect of the early Christian mission to the Caucasus. In addition, Armenian sources recount that education was another organizational means of spreading and strengthening Christianity. The *History of the Armenians* features the Illuminator's concern with providing a system of Christian education, specifically to instruct the families of the religious leaders of pre-Christian Armenia. Gregory's target market reflected the idea that Christianization of existing institutions was more efficient than starting from scratch and competing with such institutions. This principle has already been seen in the presentation of children in the Georgian hagiographical material. The difference is one of organization: the Armenian account seems to reflect a more coordinated plan. It is no surprise that personal accounts of children and their families play a less prominent role in Agathangelos's account of Gregory's educational activity. The problems of shame and name had been transformed into a struggle for power between rival great houses in Armenia with the conversion of King Tiridates in 301. Once Christianization had been taken out of the hands of the random individual missionary and had become a matter of state, glimpses at popular views of Christianization disappeared, and the struggle between Christian and non-Christian families in the Georgian accounts changed to that between powers and their interests, a more impersonal calculus of conversion.

IV. CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND VENUES FOR FURTHER STUDY: GEORGIAN CHILDREN AND THEIR NEIGHBORS

The picture of early and medieval Christian childhood in Georgia that has emerged from the sources studied here remains sketchy, but nevertheless is characterized by manifold details. Religious concerns clearly color the narratives available to the modern reader and thus also lend their perspectives to what is known about children's experiences. The children that appear on the pages of these Georgian hagiographical accounts come from a broad range of social backgrounds. They come from families that belong to the low ranks of gardeners and peasants, to financially better of merchants, all the way up to members of the royal households. The scarce data that is available does not spell out in detail what hardships children from simpler economic situations may have experienced.¹⁰⁰ Yet at least in

100. For a masterful study of the social history of children reflected in religious texts from the earliest Christian period, see for example Bettina Eltrop, *Denn solchen gehört das*

a few cases opportunities for education also were available to children in servile ranks, as shown for example in the *Martyrdom of Shushanik*. The diversity of perspectives on children's lives that is offered in the material studied here also manifests itself in the broad spectrum of ethnic origins of several of the main figures of the earliest Georgian hagiographical narratives. Neither the Armenian Shushanik in Jacob of Tsurta's *Martyrdom of Shushanik*, nor the Persian Eustace in the anonymous *Martyrdom of Eustace the Cobbler*, nor the Saracene Abo in John of Saban's *Martyrdom of Abo of T'bilisi* was of Georgian origin.¹⁰¹ The views on children that the authors of these martyrdom accounts offer are expressive not of a narrow, nationalistic construction of childhood, but rather encompass views that illustrate attitudes and practices that are valid for the broader Caucasian realm, and even beyond.

For Georgian hagiographers, speaking of children clearly served the purpose of advancing the narrative of the conversion of the Caucasus to Christianity. It also proved to be a valuable tool for highlighting the central role of appeals to family structures when the need arose to find support for the preservation of Christianity in the Caucasus, especially during times when other religions posed challenges to such a Christian identity. A further area of research that is promising is of a comparative nature.

Early medieval childhood in Armenian accounts as well as in legendary accounts of Georgia's neighbors to the north and to the northeast, for example the Lazian people, merits study.¹⁰² Occasional comments above have already indicated that differences in approach to married life left their impact also on children's conceptions and lives. Those accounts also reflect distinct narratives, for example of characterizations of heroic children. Comparisons for example with accounts of the childhood and youth of princely figures in Georgian sources would be of interest. A clearer picture of early medieval childhood in the greater Caucasus area, and consequently in the whole of the medieval world, is bound to emerge from such efforts of a comparative analysis and study of the comprehensive set of material available in these accounts.

Himmelreich. *Kinder im Matthäusevangelium. Eine feministisch-sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Stuttgart: Ulrich E. Grauer, 1996).

101. See also Rapp, *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography*, 190.

102. Armenian Fairy Tales, for example, those collected and edited by Susie Hoogasian-Villa, *100 Armenian Tales and Their Folkloristic Relevance* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1966), provide a good additional starting point for investigation, beyond the stories collected in Colarusso, *Nart Sagas from the Caucasus*.